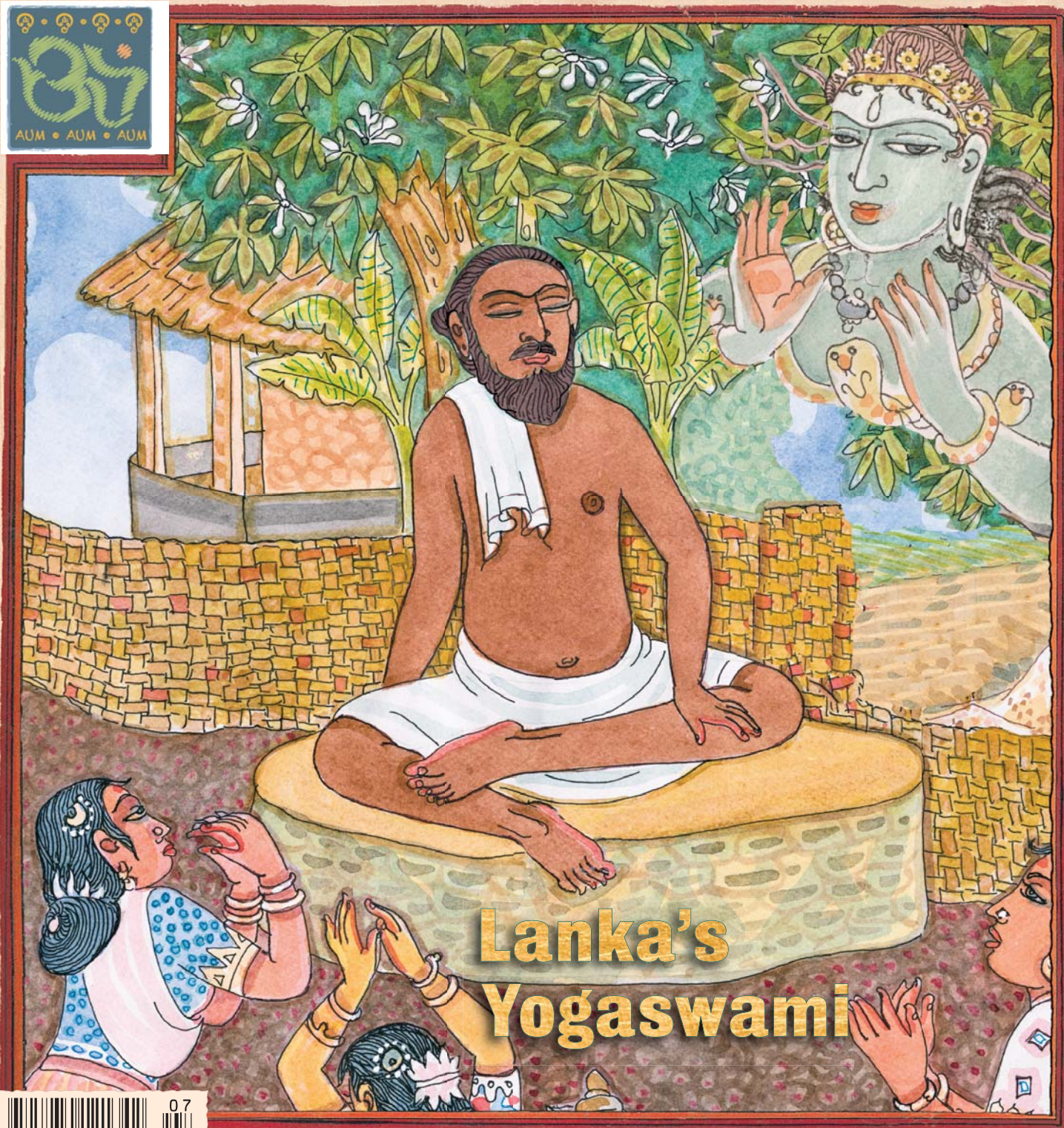


HINDUISM TODAY

Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance



S. RAJAM



DEVRAJ AGARWAL

COVER: For four years Yogaswami meditated under an olive tree in Sri Lanka. Here artist S. Rajam captures that severe sadhana as devotees approach prayerfully and Siva graces the great guru's striving; children in Rishikesh, dressed for a religious celebration.

JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 2014 • THE HINDU YEAR JAYA, 5115

Bodhinatha Veylanswami

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Letters to the editor, subscription and editorial inquiries may be sent to HINDUISM TODAY, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 USA, letters@hindu.org. HINDUISM TODAY (ISSN# 0896-0801; USPS# 023082), July/August/September 2014, Volume 36, No. 3. Editorial: 1-808-822-7032; subscriptions from USA and Canada 1-877-255-1540; subscriptions, copies or bulk orders from other countries 1-808-240-3109; subscribe@hindu.org; advertising: 1-888-464-1008, ads@hindu.org. All-department fax: 1-808-822-4351. HINDUISM TODAY is published four times a year in January, April, July and October by Himalayan Academy, a nonprofit educational institution at 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746-9304 USA. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, Founder; Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, Publisher; Paramacharya Sadasivanatha Palaniswami, Editor-in-Chief. USA subscriptions: US\$35/1 year, \$65/2 years, \$95/3 years, \$155/5 years, \$1,001/lifetime. Contact us for international rates. In Malaysia: Sanathana Dharma Publications, Kovind Enterprise, No. 17, Jalan Ungu U9/29, Sunway Kayangan, 40150 Shah Alam. Tel: 016-380-2393; E-mail: silvarajos@yahoo.com. In Singapore: Sanathana Dharma Publications, Blk 210 #06-326, Pasir Ris Street 21, 510210. Tel: 9664-9001; E-mail: dsam55@gmail.com. For permission to republish a HINDUISM TODAY article, e-mail letters@hindu.org or fax 1-808-822-4351. Printed in USA. Periodicals postage paid at Kapaa, Hawaii, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HINDUISM TODAY, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304.

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Rishikesh

One of the town's two landmark bridges, the 284-foot Lakshman Jhula (below) crosses 70 feet above the river Ganga, with the Trayambakeshwar Temple behind. It is 2.5 kilometers upstream from the more recent 450-foot Ram Jhula. Follow our reporting team as the explore the cultural and religious wonders of this famous holy city... page 18



Main photo: Pilgrims congregate in the center of the bridge for the best view and sense of the Ganga; (inset, left to right) bridge traffic includes a vegetable vendor restocking his store on the opposite bank; cows crossing unfazed by the bridge's constant sway; and pilgrims of all ages

GLOBAL DHARMA

KERALA

Time to Celebrate!

IN EARLY APRIL THE MALABAR region of northern Kerala celebrated its musical and colorful Pooram festivals. The oldest and most elaborate of these takes place at Vadakkumnathan temple in Thrissur. For seven days the surrounding buildings are decorated with colorful lights, and people celebrate with great fanfare amid the summer heat.

This year's event included fireworks, processions of elephants,

and the festival's unique rhythmic Panchavadyam (orchestra of five instruments), which parades some 250 musicians among the tens of thousands of worshippers.

The event was conceived by Raja Rama Varma, Maharaja of Cochin from 1790 to 1805, who unified the ten temples around Vadakkunnathan and organized a mass celebration. Today, over 200 years later, the festival continues to grow in popularity.



Elephants on parade: During the crowded festival, decorated elephants follow behind the rows of Panchavadyam musicians

USA

Dairy Farming with Robots

AMERICAN DAIRY FARMERS now have new options for staffing their daily operations. According to a recent article in the *New York Times*, some farmers in the northeastern United States have invested in robots for their daily feeding and milking needs. The robots are the work of Lely, a European company which specializes in the creation of intelligent farm equipment—everything from feed robots to wind turbines.

For the dairy farmer, the most important of the company's products is the laser-guided

milking machine—a high-tech system with some nice benefits for the cows themselves. Traditionally dairy cows are milked twice a day; but with the robot present, the cows can simply walk up of their own accord and be milked whenever desired. Delayed milking can be painful for a cow, but this way milking is always on their own schedule. One farmer noted it just took a few days for the cows to figure it out, and his cows have happily started milking themselves—six times a day.

The future is now.



The new farmhand: This robot uses laser guided precision to milk the cow without a single human present

PAKISTAN

Temples No More

A RECENT SURVEY CONDUCTED by the All Pakistan Hindu Rights Movement (PHRM) has disclosed some disturbing information about Hindu temples in Pakistan, according to an article in the *The Express Tribune*. The survey looked at 428 sites in the country and concluded that only

20 of these sites are still functioning as Hindu places of worship. Since 1990 the other 408 Hindu temples and shrines have been converted into toy stores, restaurants, government offices, schools and more. Most of these sites have been leased for commercial and residential purposes by Pakistan's Evacuee Trust Property Board, which now controls about 135,000 acres of land owned by over four million Hindus.

PHRM chairman Haroon Sarab Diyal shared some examples of temples being wrongfully repurposed. The Kali Bari Temple in Dera Ismail Khan has been rented out to a Muslim group. Another Hindu temple in the district of Bannu, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, has been turned into a candy shop. The Siva temple in Kohat has been converted into a government primary school, and another Hindu temple in Punjab was demolished and reconstructed as a community center.

Most Pakistani Hindus have been driven from their country by religious persecution or killed outright. Those who remain face increasing odds.



Fading temples: A Hindu temple in Taxila, near Rawalpindi, Pakistan

VEGETARIANISM

Environmental Benefits of a Meat-free Diet

DURING THE YEAR 2013 THE state of California experienced one of the worst droughts in recorded history. California grows nearly 50 percent of the nation's fruits, nuts and vegetables, so Americans are beginning to pay more attention to the amount of water it takes to grow various types of food.

A recent article in the *New York Times* highlights the "water footprint" of foods. For instance, it takes 33 gallons of water to grow a single tomato. While one ton of vegetables requires about 85,000 gallons of water, one ton of beef requires well over 4,000,000 gallons!

California devotes 80 percent of its water to agriculture, so it's important to assess just how efficiently that water is being used. The article points out an easy,

accessible, inexpensive and highly effective action most citizens can take to help alleviate California's recurrent water shortages (and the resultant high

food prices): decreasing or completely eliminating the meat in one's diet can reduce one's personal water footprint by almost 60 percent.



Dusty and dry: A ranch in California suffers months without rainfall



Worship through dance: A group of dancers performing at the Natyanjali Festival in Chidambaram

TAMIL NADU

Dancing for the Gods

THE SACRED TRADITION OF ritual dance in temples has seen a revival in recent decades. Chidambaram's Natyanjali festival of dance, started in 1981, draws over 1,000 dancers and artists from throughout India and around the world to participate in the event. Lasting from late March to early April, the festival includes classical forms of the Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Mohiniyattam, Kattak, Odissi, Sattriya, Manipuri, and Chau Koodiyattam disciplines.

For thousands of years worshipful dance was considered one of the most sacred offerings in many temples throughout India; but after Britain gained control of the country, temple dancing was banned in many states. Despite that setback, many forms of sacred dance persisted, some being passed down through families and individual gurus. Thanks to festivals such as Natyanjali, this intensely personal form of worship is regaining popularity in India.

Sanskrit Traveled the Silk Road

A SEMINAR HELD IN NEW Delhi last September presented information on more than a century's worth of archeological findings, shedding light on the profound connection created between India and China by the ancient trade routes known collectively as the Silk Road. Entitled "Sanskrit and the Silk Road," the highly informative collection of research, organized by the Institute of Indo-Asian Studies and Bhavan's Center of

Indology, offered a colorful look at the translation and transfer of both Hindu and Buddhist teachings over the Silk Road and within the many monasteries and settlements along the way.

Since the times of the Indus Valley, the trade routes in Central Asia flourished facilitating the era's greatest exchange of goods, culture and knowledge. These routes stretched from the borders of Rome through the hills of Northern India and

Central Asia and on to the great empires of China. The traffic involved not only an exchange of international commodities but an intermingling of the cultures and religious heritages of distant peoples.

Monasteries in particular documented the great philosophical connections between India and China. Monks traveling between or residing in these monasteries acted as translators and purveyors of texts from India into the far East and elsewhere. Sanskrit texts were translated into many other languages, including Manchu, Tibetan, Mongolian and Chinese. Today some of the oldest printed items in the world are in Sanskrit, and were found not in India, but in China via this cultural exchange.

For many years Hindu and Buddhist monasteries throughout areas of Central Asia remained—quite literally—buried under the sands of time. Expeditions to these ancient places over the last century have unearthed important texts and artifacts which have helped to reconstruct the missing history of this area and its great religions.



The Gayatri mantra: This ancient scroll translates the Gayatri mantra into four different languages



The Diamond Sutra: The oldest-dated book in the world is a Chinese translation of the Sanskrit *Ajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra*, a Buddhist dialogue about the nature of perception

BRIEFLY...

IN LATE JANUARY, 2014, DOZENS of residents in Kesiman village gathered at the Luhur Dalem Mutering Jagat Temple in Bali, for the planting of some 1,500 trees. According to an article by *The Jakarta Post*, the purpose was twofold: to conserve water in this environmentally sensitive area and to beautify the culturally important temple and its surroundings.

ON APRIL 10, 2014, UNITED states Congressman Mike Honda introduced the Freedom of Faith Act, which if successful would permanently allow for religious workers to obtain visas. "Unlike other faiths, Hindus lack

facilities in the United States to train priests and religious workers here," said Harsh Voruganti, HAF's Associate Director of Public Policy. "We depend heavily upon the Religious Worker Visa to effectively staff our temples and religious institutions."

IN MARCH, 2014, HINDUS OF THE South American country of Guyana celebrated Holi with great fanfare. Holi is a national holiday in Guyana, since the country's 270,000 Hindus make up one third of the total population. With the joyful flurry of colored powders, the general merriment and the fervent display of devotion for

Lord Siva and His triumph over darkness, Hindus from any country in the world would have felt completely at home participating in the festival.

A TEAM OF SCIENTISTS MONITOR-ing a telescope at the South Pole have found evidence that may help prove a theory by Stanford physicist Andrei Linde. Linde's 1986 "eternal chaotic inflation" theory suggests that the universe was born in the merest fraction of a second, expanding exponentially from a size smaller than a proton. According to findings released in March, the South Pole telescope has detected gravitational waves thought to be the first tremors of the moment the Universe began, when it was just a trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second old.

IN A RECENT CEREMONY at Gatterick Garrison Army base in the UK, a Siva Lingam was installed at the base's recently constructed temple annex. Carved in India, the Lingam will now be available not only to soldiers on the base but also to the area's wider Hindu community. Hindus from across Yorkshire visited to take part in the event.

Global Dharma
news provided by

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PHOTOS LEFT TO RIGHT: WIKICOMMONS; RAGHU VIRA ARCHIVES



HINDUISM TODAY was founded on January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001). It is a nonprofit educational activity of Himalayan Academy, with the following purposes: 1. To foster Hindu solidarity as a unity in diversity among all sects

and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



Founder:
Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

Publisher:
Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Editor-in-Chief:
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Publisher's Aide: Paramacharya Sivanatha Ceyonswami
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IN MY OPINION

Dharma in Academia

A plan to transform the study of Indic civilization

BY PROF. SHIVA G. BAJPAI

NEVER BEFORE IN history has Indian culture been studied by more students than it is today in the curricula of formal education systems in America. It is an integral part of the today's World Civilization and World History courses at both K-12 and college levels. Through these courses millions of students acquire "authoritative"—but questionable—knowledge about Indic Civilization.

In order to ensure an authentic narrative of their culture, centers for advanced studies in Chinese, Japanese and Islamic civilization, religion, and culture have grown exponentially across American higher education. However, advanced, comprehensive programs in Indic civilizational and religious-cultural studies barely exist. The importance and influence of such centers of study are not well understood by Indian Americans. The South Asia centers which do exist focus on the socioeconomics and geopolitics of the South Asian nations while minimizing the relevance of the Indic Civilization and its traditional religion and culture.

A critical problem revolves around the prevailing narrative about Indian Civilization and, particular, Hindu dharma. The key to both is the concept of dharma, meaning "that which upholds or sustains," which defines the uniqueness of Indic civilization and accounts for its uninterrupted continuity for over five millennia. However, the equation of dharma mainly with religion or only as interpreted by today's Euro-centric scholars prevents comprehensive appreciation of its historic import as a system of wisdom. This misunderstanding threatens the very definition of authentic Indic identity as a significant component of world history and civilization. The Dharma Civilization Foundation (DCF) is a Los Angeles-based 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, of which I am a trustee and founding president. DCF was created to promote the multidisciplinary study of, and research in, dharma



at accredited institutions of higher education—colleges and universities. Engaging with highly qualified faculty, DCF seeks to advance an integral and transformative approach to understanding Indic culture, religions and civilization that will support a narrative of India's past which is consistent with the actual lived experience of dharma. This effort is both meaningful in the present

global and Indian context and inspirational for the future, as a counterpoint to the prevailing Euro-American version of Indian culture.

DCF aspires to fulfill its mission by creating appropriate academic and intellectual infrastructure, including professorships, centers for advanced study, fellowships, scholarships, endowed chairs and innovative degree programs, journals, book series and other publishing projects. A number of these have already been launched, notably, endowed chairs at the University of California, Irvine, and the University of Southern California, as well as the *International Journal of Dharma Studies*.

DCF and the Graduate Theological Union, which functions in collaboration with the University of California, Berkeley, have recently agreed to enter into a partnership. The goal is to establish a Center for Dharma Studies within GTU, as well as the first Graduate School of Hindu Dharma Studies in higher education as an independent institution affiliated with GTU.

In this endeavor, the philosophy of the DCF is: The *Concord*, rather than the *Clash*, of Civilizations—*Ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti* ("Truth is one, the wise ones speak of It by many names"). DCF invites the Indo-American community to get engaged with this historic vision and mission and contribute towards its fulfillment. (see page 78.)

SHIVA G. BAJPAI, PHD, is professor emeritus of history at California State University, Northridge. Email: hchisoo6@csun.edu

Noninjury: the Foremost Virtue

Belief in the law of karma and accepting the divinity of all beings are the twin pillars of ahimsa—compassionate nonhurtfulness

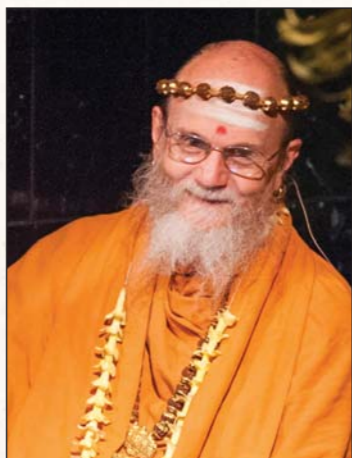
BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

NONINJURY IS THE FIRST AND FOREMOST ethical principle of every Hindu. In Sanskrit this virtue is called ahimsa. The *Mahabharata* extols its importance, saying, "Ahimsa is the highest dharma. It is the highest purification. It is also the highest truth from which all dharma proceeds." An excellent definition is found in the *Shandilya Upanishad*: "Ahimsa is not causing pain to any living being at any time through the actions of one's mind, speech or body." Note the threefold nature of this nonhurtfulness: It applies not only to our actions, but also to our words and even our thoughts.

Is the principle of nonviolence absolute under all circumstances? My Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, answered this question by stipulating a few "regrettable exceptions." The first exception applies to extreme circumstances, such as when faced with imminent danger, in which case individuals may elect to injure or even kill to protect their life or that of another. Another exception applies to those who are members of a police force or armed forces. However, even those individuals should not use violence unless absolutely necessary. The Los Angeles police department, as an example, has a policy called minimum use of force that is in consonance with this Hindu viewpoint. "The police should use physical force to the extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient to achieve police objectives; and police should use only the reasonable amount of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective."

A common justification for using violence is retaliation for injuries to you, members of your family, your religion or nation. There are many in the world today who believe that in those instances you have a duty to personally retaliate. This is commonly referred to as the "eye for an eye" mentality. However, Hinduism does not support this idea. In fact, our oldest scripture, the *Rig Veda*, speaks against it: "Return not blow for blow, nor curse for curse, neither meanness for base tricks. Shower blessings instead."

Rather than retaliation, Hinduism favors using society's established channels for finding a remedy. Take as an example a common movie plot. Someone shoots and kills your brother during a robbery, and the rest of the film is devoted to your chasing down the robber and shooting him to punish him and get even. What, then, happens in the next life, the sequel? There is definitely a negative karma to be faced for killing in revenge. Perhaps another robbery will take place and you will be killed. Better to let the police take care of the robber. The policeman has taken an oath to uphold the law and therefore creates no negative karma if, in capturing the criminal, he has no



choice but to injure him.

When it comes to harming others through words, speaking harshly to individuals or yelling at them is obviously included and should be avoided. In addition, there is the more indirect approach of utilizing joking, teasing, gossiping and backbiting to harm others. How do we know if we are speaking in a way that is harming or that is helping another? An effective fourfold test is to be sure what we are saying is true, kind, helpful and necessary. If it is, then it will certainly be nonhurtful.

You may be wondering how backbiting can hurt someone, as they are not present to hear the criticism. It is the thought force that they feel. The same applies to critical thoughts that we don't verbalize. Both are the most subtle form of injury. My guru described it in an interesting way: "When you defile others, mentally and verbally, through backbiting gossip about the happenings in their lives, you are hurting them. You are actually making it difficult for them to succeed, to even persist where they are. They sense, they feel the ugliness that you are projecting toward them."

Looking again at our definition of ahimsa from the *Sandilya Upanishad*, we note the phrase "not causing pain to any living being." In other words, ahimsa extends beyond human beings. It includes animals, insects and plants as well. A verse in the *Yajur Veda* speaks directly to this idea: "You must not use your God-given body for killing God's creatures, whether they are human, animal or whatever."

A way that many Hindus honor this injunction is by following a vegetarian diet. The *Tirukural*, an important scripture on ethics written some two thousand years ago, has an entire chapter on vegetarianism, "Abstaining from Eating Meat." It states that vegetarianism is the way of insightful souls who have realized that meat is the butchered flesh of another creature and that such restraint is an act of greater value than a thousand ghee offerings consumed in sacrificial fires.

A nonviolent approach is even extended to insects. Instead of thoughtlessly killing household pests, stop their entry. Likewise with garden insects or predators—instead of killing them, keep them away by natural means. A regrettable exception is that when predators, pests, bacteria and disease threaten the health or safety of human beings or their animals, they may be eradicated.



Regrettable exceptions: While nonviolence is a guiding principle for Hindus, there are instances when violence is permitted. One such exception is the legal enforcement of law and the protection of society and the nation. Here a general directs the army, whose duty may rightly include unavoidable injury.

Hindus even see the Divine within people who are acting in evil ways, such as criminals or terrorists, and therefore seek not to harm them. An amazing example of this arose in Bali in 2002 when terrorists bombed a bar, killing over 200 people. The Balinese Hindus held a ceremony that sought forgiveness for the perpetrators.

We should guard against taking on the Western perspective that some people are intrinsically evil, the enemy, and therefore it is all right to treat them inhumanely. The law of karma does not distinguish between hurting an enemy or hurting a friend. The *Tirukural* affirms: "Harming others, even enemies who harmed you unprovoked, surely brings incessant sorrow."

Beyond these two philosophical bases, the *Tirukural* provides two more motivations for nonviolence. The first is that it is simply how high-minded people act: "It is the principle of the pure in heart never to injure others, even when they themselves have been hatefully injured." And the second is that it is a way of encouraging the injurer to reform his behavior and give up violence. The *Tirukural* puts it well: "If you return kindness for injuries received and forget both, those who harmed you will be punished by their own shame."

A lack of compassion will obstruct our practice of ahimsa. When we are overly self-centered and oblivious to the feelings of others, we can hurt someone and not even be aware of it. Here are a few suggestions for deepening our sense of compassion for people. One simple way is to take care of animals. This is particularly helpful in teaching compassion to children. They learn to understand the needs of the animal and how to take care of it without unnecessarily disturbing or hurting it.

Another way to increase compassion is by gardening and growing plants. For the plant to survive, we need to understand its nature and properly take care of it. We can't put a sun-loving plant in the shade and expect it to do well. We can't over-water a plant that needs a small amount of water and expect it to thrive. Nurturing plants and animals prepares us to care for our fellow human beings.

A third suggestion relates to computers and computer games. Unfortunately, these days many children grow up spending way too much time alone immersed in a computer, playing often violent video games. This can stunt their normal emotional growth and social development. They can become strangers to compassion, lacking in healthy feelings for others. A more balanced upbringing is needed, a reasonable amount of computer access balanced out by healthy interaction with family members, friends and others.

Here is a concluding quote from my guru which beautifully ties together the ideals of nonviolence and compassion: "Practice compassion, conquering callous, cruel and insensitive feelings toward all beings. See God everywhere. Be kind to people, animals, plants and the Earth itself. Forgive those who apologize and show true remorse. Foster sympathy for others' needs and suffering. Honor and assist those who are weak, impoverished, aged or in pain. Oppose family abuse and other cruelties."

There are two philosophical principles which form the basis for ahimsa. The first is the law of karma. The knowledge that if we harm another, we will be harmed in the future is a powerful motivation to refrain from violence. The *Tirukural's* chapter entitled "Avoidance of Injuring Others" offers pertinent insight: "If a man visits sorrow on another in the morning, sorrow will visit him unbidden in the afternoon."

A second basis for ahimsa is the perception of the Divine shining forth within all things, all beings, all peoples. When we see the Divine in someone, we naturally do not want to hurt them. Pious

Hindus in Croatia

We greatly appreciate HINDUISM TODAY, both for its efforts in preserving the Sanatana Dharma and in presenting it to the broader public. We felt it necessary to write this letter after having read the article "The Hindu Diaspora Within Continental Europe" that was published in the Jan/Feb/Mar, 2014 edition of the magazine. I would like to present you an additional Hindu religious society in continental Europe—The Hindu Society of Croatia, which has been active in the Republic of Croatia since 1984 and became registered and recognized by the Republic of Croatia as a religious society in 2003.

We are happy to admit that HINDUISM TODAY, and some of the famous books of yours, were our main inspiration for the construction of our Croatian web pages about the Sanatana Dharma. Over the last year we have held multiple lectures about different Hindu festivals, some of which have been visited by the broader public. For example, the lecture on Holi has become very popular, due to the similarities with traditional Croatian customs at that time of year. In this way we keep educating the public about Hindu culture being an ancient universal culture of humankind. We are hoping to keep in touch and looking forward to read from you soon.

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Wonderful Magazine

I regularly read HINDUISM TODAY magazine and admire the profound spiritual thoughts and articles. Gurudeva's explanations are very nice and simple for common people. I wish this magazine could also come in other languages like Tamil, the language of ancient Saiva Siddhanta, for the benefit of Tamil-speaking people. This would help them better understand and appreciate the great culture they belong to. It would also help them realize their responsibility to support it in modern times.

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My Eternal Gratitude

Each issue of HINDUISM TODAY carries an energy all its own, and this April issue was no different. It moved me so deeply that I had to take my thoughts to the keyboard. It started with some wonderful letters and continued with great clarity about Secular Humanism — Jai to Satguru Bodhinatha! That was followed by the amazing Agamic word-picture of Mt. Meru, wow! Malaysia's Waterfall Temple of devotion was so inspiring, and so was the

LETTERS

sweet simplicity of the Cham peoples. Thank you for that powerful reminder to manage anger, how could we forget! The sharpness of the lassi at Smithsonian yoga exhibition left a radiant afterglow. I loved the awesome story of the creation of the Swaminarayan Bhashyam and the feeling of Guruhari so much, that I am mentally saying "Guruhara." The bright, bold, clear voices of the HAF youth are such great role models for us. And after the vivid review of Upanishad Ganga, I wish there was more! Thank you, thank you, thank you, dream team! How, oh how, do you do it every single time? I humbly bow to you. Infinite love and eternal gratitude.

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Respecting Nature

Dear Hindu brothers from across the seas, I enjoyed your article very much and, like yourselves, I am concerned about pollution, especially in the river systems. I traveled to India for the first time in 2012. I found the Ganges River so beautiful, lovely and sacred. I believe in respecting Nature and planting trees. Education is the key. The *Mahabharata* says that even if there is only one tree full of flowers and fruits in a village, that place becomes worthy of worship and respect. I am not from a Hindu background, but I have a deep respect for your values and devotion to God. "Plants are mothers and Goddesses." *Rig Veda Samhita 10.97.4*

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Vietnam's Champa Kingdom

The article "Vietnam's Champa Kingdom" by Sri Vrndavan Brannon Parker (Apr/May/Jun, 2014) was very informative. I wonder if Sri Parker can tell us how to get there? If so, many of your readers would be able to visit the ancient sites on their trips to Vietnam and Cambodia.

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Hindu India

I read with interest Maria Wirth's opinion piece: "Why not Hindu India?" (Jan/Feb/Mar, 2014). She has rightly pinpointed the problem with a Westernized Indian elite. Let us go back in history and see the truth: On August 15th, 1947, when India was in a broken state, the foundation of an independent India was wrongly placed on the basis of two religions. I believe Gandhi and Nehru failed the majority Hindu population by forcing India to remain

without religion and be secular. We have seen that the secularism in India has been one of the most abused terms, and everybody defines it as it may please them. In India it seems like anything anti-Hindu is connected to "secularism." I can see the change in India. People have realized we must declare India as Hindu India, and I hope that this will be a reality in a very near future.

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Hinduism's Health Benefits?

I enjoyed reading your article, "Hinduism's Biological Benefits" (April/May/June, 2014). Perhaps a whole book could be written about how Hinduism can benefit a person, not only physically, but also emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. The article already addresses how certain Hindu techniques can synchronize the right and the left hemispheres of the brain and how meditation can improve neural connections and lengthen one's life. Non-violence and truth are the two cornerstones of Hinduism. Nonviolence at a physical level discourages Hindus from killing animals for food, and the vegetarian diet of Hindus makes them physically healthy. Nonviolence at the emotional level makes them loving and emotionally stable. Nonviolence at the intellectual level makes them peaceful by nature and enables them to think clearly, while nonviolence at the spiritual level makes them love every being, since they can see a spark of divinity in everything. Practicing Truth allows a Hindu to have a good conscience, helping him to get along with himself and others, and enabling him to sleep peacefully at night.

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The Waterfall Temple

First of all, I would like to say "thank you," from the bottom of my heart, for making our beloved Penang Lord Balathandayuthabani better known to other parts of the world through your beautiful article. It is hard to find the words to say. It's a great work and a great dedication from you and your team, in publishing HINDUISM TODAY. Not forgetting Rajiv for his wonderful write-up about SBYO. One thing is for sure, this article will surely touch the heart of every SBYO member. I want to thank our beloved Lord Balathandayuthabani for giving us this great honor through the wonderful team at HINDUISM TODAY. This was something we all never thought of. I just got my copy of HINDUISM TODAY and we have offered the first copy to the permanent president of SBYO, Lord Sri

Balathandayuthabani. After being blessed by Him, we distributed the copies to the temple and temple priest. We have started to distribute some to our members as well. We will also distribute to the temple management committee and to the state Hindu Endowment Board chairman. It's really nice getting to know great people like the HINDUISM

TODAY staff. I really hope that you will someday make a visit to Penang and our Beloved Lord and Temple.

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or visit: www.hinduismtoday.com/letters

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.

"All the Children Are Beautiful Souls"

Help your magazine spread joy and happiness

WHEN JENNIFER MET RON BURKE (top in both pictures) in 1980, she was 16 and dreaming of becoming an actress. Two years later, they married and started a business. But her longing for the stage would not be denied. One day she was invited to participate in a clowning act, and it all suddenly clicked: clowning blended her love of the stage with her love of children. She had found her life's calling. She became Tickle the Clown, took a university course in the fine art of clowning and has been performing ever since.

But she does not perform alone. Husband Ron soon caught the bug, left his young business and joined the clown act. When children came—Sunny, Spring and Aubrey (pictured, middle row)—each joined the family troupe as soon as they could walk. And the three brought a new magical element into the show: music.

Today's performances include interludes of a dozen different instruments, much to the delight of the youngsters. But music also has its serious side. Daughter Spring (on left in the photos), who has a Master of Arts in Violin Performance, teaches at several music schools in Vancouver, Canada, where they live.

Another magical element contributed by the second generation is two grandchildren. Luna, 8, and India, 6, who have now blended into the family tradition as naturally and enthusiastically as their forebears.

During all these years Ron was quietly nurturing another passion and sharing it with the family: spirituality. He met Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (Gurudeva), the founder of HINDUISM TODAY, in 1973 and was instantly captured. "Everything Gurudeva said rang true and has grown within me—and us—all these years. It's helped our family stay happily together, it's in-

spired us and infused our clowning with depth of meaning and purpose. How fortunate we feel to have an occupation where we can all join together to create laughter and joy, leaving only happy memories as residue. It's a blessing."

"It takes a lot of intuition to read each group of kids and know what to do in the moment. Hinduism and HINDUISM TODAY have given us that ability. We see all the children as beautiful souls. We've learned to blend with their minds, see things as they do, become as they see us, and perform to their hearts' content."

Today Ganesha, Siva and Gurudeva preside in the family shrine room, where the gentle daily sadhanas include reading of scripture and HINDUISM TODAY, japa and bhajan. "We are Hindus at heart," declares Ron. "The magazine has been our constant companion. It keeps us reminded of the subtleties we could easily forget, and in touch with like-minded people all around the planet, which gives us a lot of strength."

The Burkes make an automatic monthly donation to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment. "The magazine has helped us so much," explains Jennifer, "we wanted to help back, so it can forever continue doing what it does best, which is actually the same as what we strive to do. Each new issue is like a new performance and a new opportunity to spread joy and happiness."

You, too, can help spread the joy that leaves no residue by lending your support to the Production Fund. You can make a single, one-time gift or arrange for a monthly donation, as the Burkes do, at hheonline.org/donate_pf. Do it now, while you are thinking about it. You can also subscribe to our Production Fund newsletter at gurudeva.org/email-news to get updates of the magazine and its all-important Production Fund. Contact us at hhe@hindu.org or call 1-808-634-5407.



Laughter and spirituality: Top, the Burkes gather for their Hinduism Today family portrait. Below, transformed and ready for inspired performing. The photo on the wall in each picture is a portrait of Gurudeva from 1973, when Ron met him.

QUOTES & QUIPS

Be unknown. God is unknown.

Satguru Siva Yogaswami (1872–1964), *Sri Lankan mystic*

Only two kinds of people can attain self-knowledge: those who are not encumbered at all with learning, that is to say, whose minds are not over-crowded with thoughts borrowed from others; and those who, after studying all the scriptures and sciences, have come to realize that they know nothing. **Sri Ramakrishna** (1836–1886), *famed guru of Swami Vivekananda*

Realize the truest reality, the real power, that you are; Infinite you are, above all danger and difficulty. **Swami Rama Thirtha** (1873–1906), *Hindu teacher and lecturer*

All the variety, all the charm, all the beauty of life is made up of light and shadow. **Leo Tolstoy** (1828–1910), *Russian writer*

Once you realize that the road is the goal and that you are always on the road, not to

reach a goal, but to enjoy its beauty and its wisdom, life ceases to be a task and becomes natural and simple, in itself an ecstasy. **Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj** (1897–1981), *Hindu guru and advaitist philosopher*

Aim high, aim at the highest, and all lower aims are thereby achieved. It is looking below on the stormy sea of differences that makes you sink. Look up, beyond these and see the One Glorious Real, and you are saved. **Ramana Maharishi** (1879–1950), *Indian guru*

Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience. **Ralph Waldo Emerson** (1803–1882), *American writer and poet*

A kindness done in the hour of need may itself be small, but in worth it exceeds the whole world. *Tirukural 102*

Don't forget love; it will bring all the madness you need to unfurl yourself across the universe. **Mirabai** (1498–1557), *mystic poet*

In shallow men the fish of little thoughts cause much commotion. In oceanic minds the whales of inspiration make hardly a ruffle. **Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri** (1855–1936), *guru of Satyananda Giri and Paramahansa Yogananda*

The Lord is in me, the Lord is in you, as life is in every seed; put false pride away and seek the Lord within. **Saint Kabir** (1440–1518), *mystic poet*

We are responsible for what we are, and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we have the power to make ourselves. If what we are now has been the result of our own past

actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in the future can be produced by our present actions; so we have to know how to act. **Swami Vivekananda** (1863–1902)

Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid. **Albert Einstein** (1879–1955), *German-born theoretical physicist*

In the long run, we only hit what we aim at. **Henry David Thoreau** (1817–1862), *American author, poet and philosopher*

After the game, the King and the Pawn go into the same box. *Italian proverb*

What you help a child to love can be more important than what you help him to learn. *African proverb*

As a well-spent day brings happy sleep, so life well used brings happy death. **Leonardo da Vinci** (1452–1519), *Italian Renaissance painter, architect and inventor*

Nonviolence is all the offerings. Renunciation is the priestly honorarium. The

final purification is death. Thus all the Divinities are established in this body. *Krishna Yajur Veda, Pranagnihotra Upanishad 46.413*

Perhaps the crescent moon smiles in doubt at being told that it is a fragment awaiting perfection. **Rabindranath Tagore** (1861–1941), *mystic poet*

Man suffers only because he takes seriously what the gods made for fun. **Alan Watts** (1915–1973), *British-born philosopher and writer*

Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect. **Mark Twain** (1835–1910), *American author*

Who is there who can conquer those who have relinquished all hostilities? *Tirukural 85*

We are already divine. No one has to redeem us; Divinity is in there. We just have to find



On the family trip to nirvana

it. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, publisher of HINDUISM TODAY

Selfless service to mankind makes you free in the world of mortals. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927–2001)

DID YOU KNOW?

The Mystic Poondiswami

DURING A PILGRIMAGE IN INDIA IN 1969, two of the future editors of HINDUISM TODAY arrived at the hut of Poondiswami, an ascetic who lived on the side of a road. Poondiswami greeted all, blessed all and ate anything people gave him, even cigarettes. He never stood up, a discipline that caused his legs to totally atrophy. He was sitting on a simple mat, his deep eyes seeming to contain the cosmos, his white-grey hair matted atop his head with a flower to grace his *jata*. Moved by this man's sadhana, the editor asked, "Swami, why have you decided not to move from this spot for so many years?" The holy man's gaze flooded the inquisitor, and Poondiswami softly retorted, "Mind absorbed in God, no place to go."

According to a 1988 article in *Saipatham* magazine, Sri Poondiswami was first seen around 1935 in a village called Kalasapakkam, in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. At first the people dismissed him as just another madman, but a miracle showed them he was something much more. One day, Swami was meditating in a nearby riverbed when suddenly there was a flash flood. All those who saw him sitting on the river bed thought he would surely be swept away and drowned in the waters. Once the flood had ebbed, the villagers rushed to the spot where they had last seen the swami and to their amazement, he was still alive, buried up to his neck in sand. They dug Poondiswami out and he walked away calmly, as if nothing extraordinary



BASICS

The Home Shrine

EVERY HINDU HOME CENTERS around the home shrine, a special room set aside and maintained to create a temple-like atmosphere in which we conduct puja, read scripture, perform *sadhana*, meditate, sing *bhajan* and do *japa*. Here the presence of the Gods is always felt, and we remember them especially morning and evening and before meals, which we offer to them before we partake.

Worship traditionally begins before dawn, with the simple act of dedication for the coming day. Before we attend or conduct a puja, we should carefully bathe the body, rinse the mouth and dress in fresh clothing. Throughout these preparations we may sing hymns or chant mantras or God's holy names silently or aloud, taking care to keep the mind free from worldly matters. We then gather

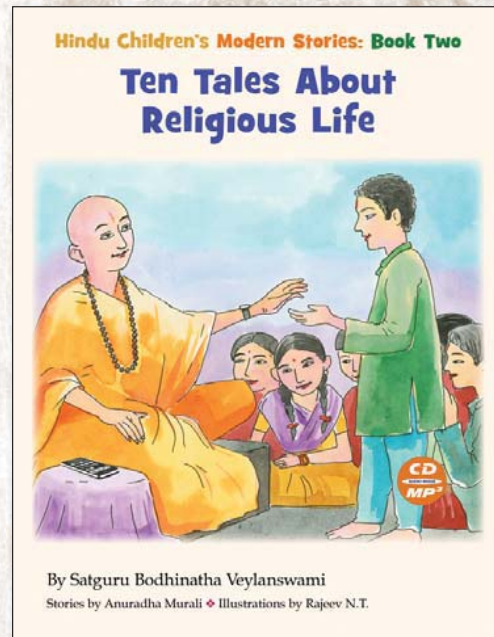
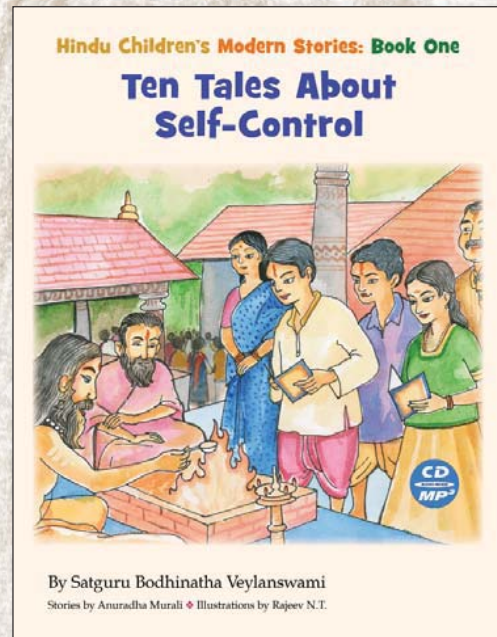
offerings for the Deity. If mealtime is near, we eat only after puja has been concluded. Our worship is only as meaningful and effective as we make it. Although the outer details of our worship are important, it is our inner feelings and thoughts, our love and devotion, which are the truest offering we can make.

The morning puja may include the repetition of the Gayatri or other mantras, followed by *sadhanas* given by one's guru. The form of home worship, *atmartha puja*, is simple: the Deities are invoked and offerings are made. After the final *arati*, or offering of the light, we supplicate them to bestow their grace on us, our family and all devotees. Evening

devotionals include a simple *arati*, *bhajan*, meditation and reading of scripture, which carries one to lofty celestial realms during sleep. The *Agamas* affirm, "Worship of one's chosen Linga by anyone in their own home for divine protection is called *atmartha puja*."



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FROM THE AGAMAS

Meditation and Initiation

Explaining the power of diksha and methods of meditative concentration

The following is a lucid translation of passages from chapters 7 and 8 of the Raurava Agama in which Sage Ruru expounds on various types of meditative concentration and on yogic initiation

I SHALL PROCEED TO SPEAK ON A SIGNIFICANT DISCIPLINE OF YOGA related to the effective process of meditation. Lord Siva is perceived in two states—formed (*sakala*) and formless (*nishkala*). *Sadyojata*, *Vamadeva*, *Aghora*, *Tatpurusha* and *Isana*—these are the five constitutive mantras of the supreme Lord. This specific yoga discipline has been well expounded by the yogis of great accomplishments devoted to Lord Siva.

The great Ishvara, as Himself in the formless state, is the Supreme Lord. He pervades the entire extent of space. He is the ultimate Lord of the primal intelligence of the Universe. He is unsurpassed, excelling all other superior Deities. He is the knower and doer of all. He presents Himself everywhere and in every object that has taken shape. He reaches all directions simultaneously. He encloses Himself within all objects of all the worlds and within all the embodied beings. He is absolutely pure, never having been limited by the bonds. Our Lord Siva, of such greatness, is to be meditated upon forever.

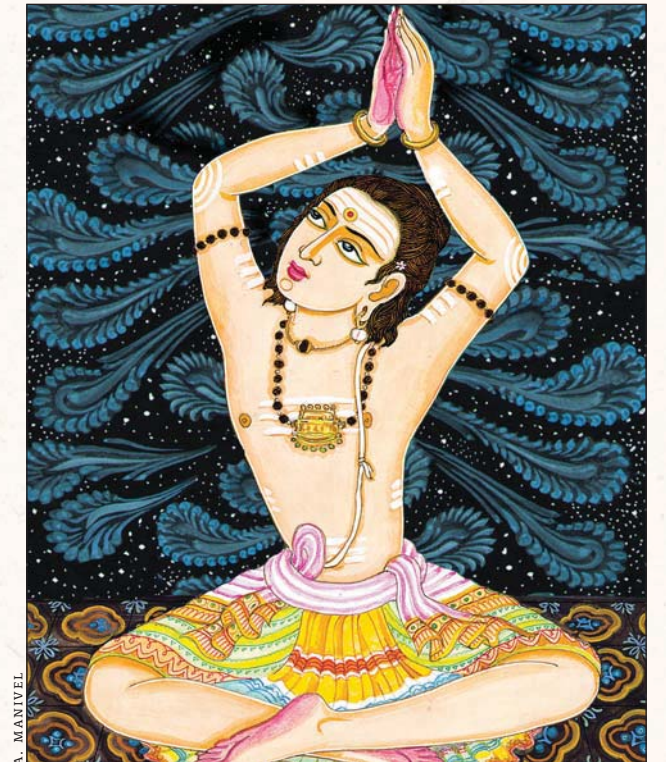
Yoga is said to be consisting of six steps—*pratyahara* (sense withdrawal), *dhyana* (awareness at attention), *pranayama* (breath control), *dharana* (concentrated awareness), *tarka* (meditative contemplation) and *samadhi* (union). Of these steps, *dharana* will now be explained. Among the specific kinds of *dharana*, *agneyi dharana* is the first. It requires awareness to be fixed on the navel plane. By the continued practice of this *dharana*, all negative factors which could pull the *sadhaka* into lower consciousness are restrained.

Let the *sadhaka* who has known the effective path of yoga from his master fix his concentrated thought at the heart-space and contemplate the steady flow of divine nectar, streaming forth from the microcosmic moon within. By the continued practice of this *dharana*, known as *saumya dharana*, drops of divine nectar are showered over all of his body and his surroundings. By this *dharana*, the *sadhaka* is consecrated and established in the highest state of purity.

Let the *sadhaka* practice *aisani dharana* by fixing his thought and breath on the *sahasrara chakra* at the top of the head. This highest kind of *dharana* is capable of accomplishing everything and enables the *sadhaka* to achieve all of his lofty desires. Through the continued practice of such *dharana*, the *sadhaka* reaches the highest transcendental place of Lord Siva in a fraction of a second.

That which is known as *amrita dharana* is capable of yielding its fruits everywhere by means of its pervasiveness. It instills purity and auspiciousness into everything. It rains the nectar-drops of supreme consciousness, consecrating body and world. This *dharana* is to be done at the highest plane, twelve planes above the *sahasrara*.

At the very occurrence of the sun rising, the darkness is dispelled completely and instantaneously. Likewise, upon the performance of relevant *diksha*, the constricting bonds of the *sadhakas*, considered in terms of merit and demerit (*dharma* and *adharma*), get removed totally. Just as the Sun illumines all these worlds through His radiant rays, even so Lord Siva illumines the consciousness of the initiated souls through His host of Shaktis (powers) functioning in the divine



Initiated: a *sadhaka* worships the Divine within himself

path of mantras and *diksha*. These Shaktis exist pervading the body of the *sadhakas* who have been blessed with *diksha*.

The heap of dry grass thrown into the blazing fire gets incinerated completely and never again attains its original state of being dry grass. In the same way, the diligent *sadhaka*, supreme among human beings, who is blessed with relevant *diksha* reaches the adorable and worthy realm of Siva, effected through *diksha* and mantra. Thereafter he never gets embodied again.

At the cessation of his bodily existence, he becomes Siva Himself, being endowed with the essential features and aspects of Siva. Having gained all the qualities of Siva, he is inseparably united with Siva. The river which flows with sweet and pleasant water reaches deeply into the ocean and attains the qualities of salty water. At the very instant of complete merger with the ocean's water, the river attains the nature of salty water, owing to the mighty power of the ocean. In the same way, the initiated *sadhaka* who has shed off his bodily existence attains oneness with Siva Tattva. There occurs no disunion between them.

DR. S. P. SABHARATHNAM SIVACHARYAR, of the Adi Saiva priest lineage, is an expert in ancient Tamil and Sanskrit, specializing in the *Vedas*, *Agamas* and *Shilpa Shastras*. This excerpt is from his recent translation of the *Raurava Agama*.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Rishikesh: City of Saints On the Banks of Ganga

Pilgrim's haven: Looking upstream toward Ram Jhula Bridge and the Himalayan foothills; (inset below) evening arati at Triveni Ghat; (inset right) Vedanta studies at Kailas Ashram



HINDUISM TODAY's journalistic team, Rajiv Malik and Dev Raj Agarwal, spent a week in Rishikesh in October, 2013, to create this story. They visited the large and famous ashrams as well as the humble hermitages of swamis living on the banks of the Ganga. They interviewed those teaching traditional Vedanta to sadhus and those coaching visitors from other countries in modern forms of yoga. They found time to sit by the river, worship and meditate. Their story opens with a description of this sacred region, its infrastructure and religious landscape, then proceeds to profiles of selected ashrams and yoga centers—large and small, famous and unknown.

BY RAJIV MALIK, NEW DELHI

“JAI GANGE! JAI MA GANGE! HAR HAR Gange!” These words reverberate in the air of Rishikesh around the clock. They greet you on the streets and in the ashrams, dharamshalas, hotels—even in the markets of this holy city. They are on the lips of every saint and pilgrim as they take their sacred bath in the cold and rushing river. While Rishikesh today is renowned for its realized saints and world-famous ashrams, even first-time pilgrims will understand within hours of their arrival that it is the river Ganga which is everything in Rishikesh. I myself came here when I was just one year old, in 1959, for my head-shaving cere-

mony. At that time the area was undeveloped as a commercial center; its many ashrams enjoyed the peace and quiet of nature. In recent decades Rishikesh—just a day's journey from Delhi—has become more and more a tourist attraction, and both the local population and economy have boomed.

History
Rishikesh comes from the Sanskrit *Hrshikesh*, a name of Vishnu that means “Lord of the Senses” and relates to a vision of the Lord obtained by a rishi meditating here in ancient times. Geographically, it is the point where the Ganga leaves the mountains and enters the plains of Northern India. The area is spoken of in the *Skanda Purana* and the *Ramayana*—the temples of Lakshman and Shatrughan relate to the latter, as do its two famous suspension foot bridges, Lakshman Jhula and Ram Jhula.

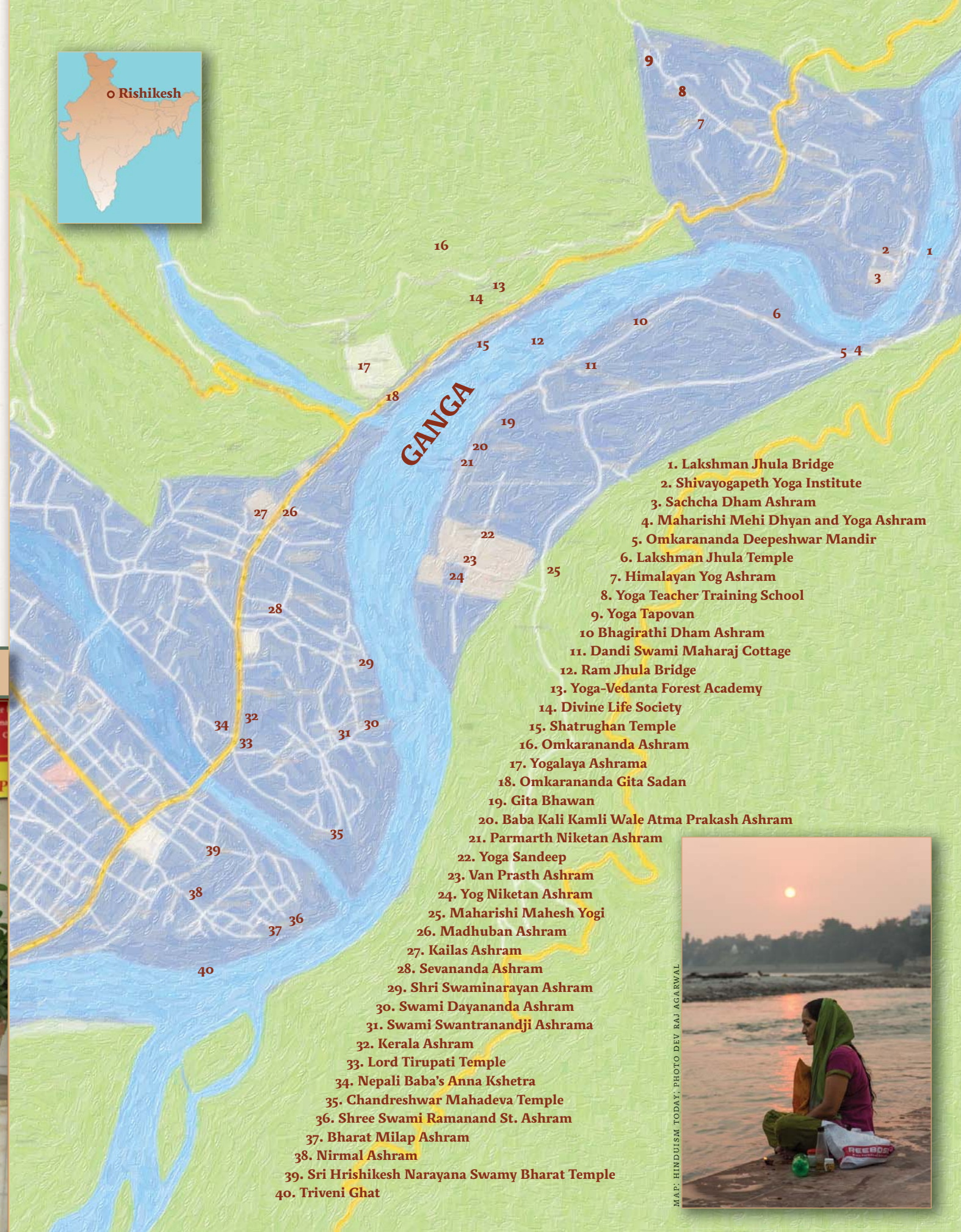
Rishikesh is the starting point for the Chota (“little”) Char Dham pilgrimage to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri—a route of hundreds of kilometers in the Himalayas, named after the Char Dham (“four holy abodes”) pilgrimage of greater India: Badrinath, Rameswaram, Dwarka and Jagannath Puri—a route of 8,000 kilometers. Tens of thousands pilgrimaged through here each year until the massive floods of June, 2013, that devastated Kedarnath. The floods killed some 6,000 people and trapped 100,000 for

days in extremely hazardous circumstances. The pilgrimage has come to a virtual halt for 2014, as damaged roads, bridges and other infrastructure are being restored. In Rishikesh itself the surging waters washed away or damaged several ghats—the wide expanses of steps into the river which line its banks in many places—and flooded an estimated 12 percent of all the town's buildings, filling the ground floors of riverside structures with mud and sand. Four months later, during our visit, the disaster still cast its long shadow over Rishikesh; the pilgrim population remained much reduced.

There are four main areas here. Rishikesh proper is the commercial center. Going upriver, one passes through Muni ki-Reti, then Shivananda Nagar, a large piece of land gifted by the king of Tehri-Garhwal to Swami Sivananda for the Divine Life Society ashram. Farther upriver is Lakshman Jhula bridge and several big temples. The area on the eastern bank is called Swargashram—a name also used for several ashrams in Rishikesh.

Pilgrims' paradise: (below) an extended family on pilgrimage to Rishikesh pose on the steps of the ancient Bharat Temple; (right) a partial list of the 150-plus major and minor ashrams, temples, yoga centers and landmarks in Rishikesh; (right inset) evening meditation at river's edge

Rishikesh: A town whose main industry is religion



1. Lakshman Jhula Bridge
2. Shivayogapeth Yoga Institute
3. Sachcha Dham Ashram
4. Maharishi Mehi Dhyan and Yoga Ashram
5. Omkarananda Deepeshwar Mandir
6. Lakshman Jhula Temple
7. Himalayan Yog Ashram
8. Yoga Teacher Training School
9. Yoga Tapovan
10. Bhagirathi Dham Ashram
11. Dandi Swami Maharaj Cottage
12. Ram Jhula Bridge
13. Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy
14. Divine Life Society
15. Shatrughan Temple
16. Omkarananda Ashram
17. Yogalaya Ashrama
18. Omkarananda Gita Sadan
19. Gita Bhawan
20. Baba Kali Kamli Wale Atma Prakash Ashram
21. Parmarth Niketan Ashram
22. Yoga Sandeep
23. Van Prasth Ashram
24. Yog Niketan Ashram
25. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi
26. Madhuban Ashram
27. Kailas Ashram
28. Sevananda Ashram
29. Shri Swaminarayan Ashram
30. Swami Dayananda Ashram
31. Swami Swantranandji Ashrama
32. Kerala Ashram
33. Lord Tirupati Temple
34. Nepali Baba's Anna Kshetra
35. Chandreshwar Mahadeva Temple
36. Shree Swami Ramanand St. Ashram
37. Bharat Milap Ashram
38. Nirmal Ashram
39. Sri Hrishikesh Narayana Swamy Bharat Temple
40. Triveni Ghat

Exploring the Town

Photographer Dev Raj Agarwal and I ensconced ourselves at the pleasant and centrally located Hotel Great Ganga in the Muni ki-Reti area. Efforts to make appointments in advance had been unsuccessful, so we proceeded on a day-by-day basis, exploring on foot or by taxi. We often just visited an ashram unannounced—a perfectly acceptable practice and a charming throwback to an earlier, less hectic life.

Mother Ganga, the heart of this town, pulled us to her whenever time allowed. Despite the nearby noise of the three-wheeler cabs plying in and out of a huge taxi stand and the hustle and bustle of the marketplace just a few yards away, as soon as we walked to the banks of Ganga, we stepped into another world. We encountered pilgrims and devotees performing simple rituals, taking their holy bath or deep in meditation. Such is the peace and serenity at the river's edge.

A different kind of experience comes from crossing the town's two hanging bridges. Lakshman Jhula (#1 on our map), 284 feet long, was built in 1939, replacing earlier

bridges washed out in floods. Its name comes from the story that Ram's brother Lakshman did penance here in ancient times and crossed the river at this point. The 450-foot Ram Jhula (#12), built in 1980, connects the area around the Divine Life Society with the temples and many ashrams on the river's eastern bank. Both bridges have big shopping areas at each end, bustling with pilgrims and tourists.

The bridges, high above the river, swing in the wind and shake as you walk across them. Here one finds a contrasting way to connect with Ganga and Rishikesh. In the early morning or late at night you can experience the cool breeze and go into a meditative state. In the late mornings and afternoons, the bridges can be packed with tourists, pilgrims, bicycles, carts and even cows, who have no fear of crossing them. Then there are the monkeys who quite literally "hang out" here. They are quick-witted thieves with the brazen skill of a New York street mugger who can relieve you of any snacks or other edibles in an instant.

Most pilgrims, especially those with lug-

gage, will opt for the charming ferry boats which ply the river. People buy fish food from vendors along the banks and throw it to the eagerly jumping fish who follow the boats.

Where there are motorable roads, despite their noise and polluting exhaust, nearly everyone takes the three-wheel cabs called tempos. But to really explore Rishikesh, one must walk long distances and negotiate hundreds of steep stairs to reach ashrams located a hundred meters above or below the main roads.

Early one morning at the ghats, we encountered Shyam Bhardwaj, an engineering student from Gorkhpur, Uttar Pradesh. He studies in nearby Dehradun and is able to

Unworldly life: (counterclockwise from below) A family holds a Hindu samskara, rite of passage, on the river ghats; the isolated but easily accessible river shore upstream from Lakshman Jhula bridge; Russian pilgrims offer worship at Triveni Ghat; a meditating sadhu; pilgrim in contemplation on a specially-built platform at river's edge

come to Rishikesh several times a year. He lamented the state of the Indian youth, "When they do not take any interest in our own traditions and culture, I feel ashamed. Modernization is compulsory, but we do not have to Westernize. Rishikesh is a spiritual place. When we sit on the banks of Ganga, we feel very peaceful."

Everyone extolled Ganga. Swami Abhishek Chaitanya of the small Kerala Ashram (#32) felt this way: "When I wanted to have a true spiritual experience in Rishikesh, I prayed to Ganga. My prayers would always bring me in contact with the sages and saints who answered my questions and doubts. Anyone who comes here with a heart full of prayers on the banks of Ganga will not go back disappointed. She is not just a body of water; she is our mother who listens, hears and knows."

A City of Temples

Almost every ashram of Rishikesh, large or small, has a temple of its own where the pilgrims and saints in residence perform their daily puja and rituals. Pilgrims and residents alike also frequent the ancient Bharat,

Shatrughan and Lakshman temples (#6, 15 and 39). These are named after the younger brothers of Lord Rama, who are said to have done penance here following the war described in the *Ramayana*. The first is near Triveni Ghat, the second near Ram Jhula bridge and the third—about 2.5 km from the first—near Lakshman Jhula bridge.

These three temples were already well known in the 8th century when Adi Shankara visited Rishikesh on his way to Badrinath, the first temple of the long Char Dham pilgrimage. According to Mahant Manoj Prapannacharya, head priest of Shatrughan Temple, pilgrims to the Chota Char Dham coming through Rishikesh used to worship first at Bharat temple, then Shatrughan and lastly Lakshman. The temples are less famous now. Still, Dinesh Chandra Nautiala, priest of the Lakshman temple, said visitors range from five hundred to a few thousand a day at his temple.

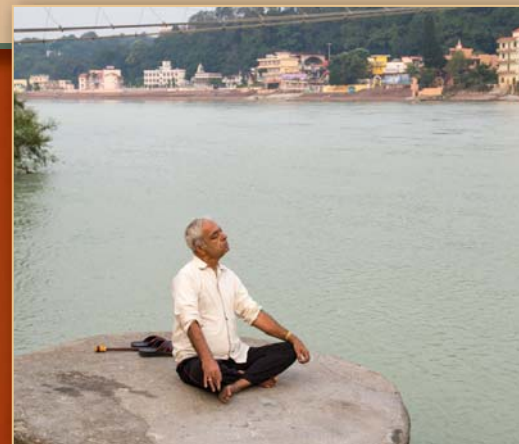
Bharat Temple's age is apparent in the heavily weathered sculptures in niches in the otherwise recently rebuilt outer walls. Head priest Ashok Prapannacharya told us

the temple maintains a *dharamshala* (religious rest house), a public school and a Sanskrit school with 90 students who can train up to the level of shastri. A museum attached to the temple has rare local artifacts that date back to the 3rd century.

Ganga Aarti

At Parmarth Niketan (#21) on the eastern shore and Triveni Ghat (#40) on a long section of the western bank pilgrims congregate in the evening to worship Ganga with oil lamps. Frequent VIP guests—most recently, Prince Charles—have made Parmarth Niketan famous internationally. An average evening sees some 300 attending at Triveni Ghat, rising to thousands on auspicious days. Ganga Seva Samiti started the Triveni program 23 years ago, about the same time as Parmarth Niketan. At both places the worship comprises bhajan, Vedic chants and offering of multi-tiered oil lamps. This relatively recent practice has been adopted in Haridwar, Banaras and many other places along the Ganga. Triveni Ghat is also popular for pilgrims taking a holy bath or performing some

In the Lap of Mother Ganga: It is the river that makes Rishikesh holy



of the 16 Hindu samskaras, rites of passage, such as my own childhood head shaving.

TEACHING ASHRAMS

THE ASHRAMS OF RISHIKESH DIFFER in their goals and focus. In some, such as Kailas Ashram, sadhus and devotees from various traditions come to learn Vedanta in a scholarly program. Others, such as the Divine Life Society, maintain the teachings of the founder and care for the devotees of their specific lineage. Some, like Parmarth Niketan, have vast accommodation facilities for pilgrims and offer intense programs in meditation, yoga and philosophy. Still others exclusively offer basic lodging for the pilgrims. Nearly all these ashrams charge no set fees for someone to stay, but accept whatever donations are offered.

Kailas Ashram

The most highly regarded traditional ashram in Rishikesh, and one of the oldest, is the Shri Kailas Brahma Vidya Peeth, popularly known as Shri Kailas Ashram, located in the Muni ki-Reti area. The ashram (#27) was founded some 150 years ago by Swami Dharmaraj Giriji Maharaj in the Advaita Vedanta tradition of Adi Shankaracharya and now has 15 branches all over India.

Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Srimat Swami Vidyanand Giriji, the head of the ashram, was traveling when we visited, so we were hosted by ashram manager Swami Pragyananda Saraswati, a senior student

of Vedanta here. He told us anyone of any guru or tradition can come to study at Kailas Ashram. While the founder belonged to the Dasanami order of sannyasins, the ashram does not exclusively perpetuate that lineage. Rather, it is a school for those wanting to learn Vedanta, with a library of around 11,500 ancient and modern books and around 900 manuscripts on various topics. The ashram's own publication division has over 90 publications to its credit. Influential Hindu leaders who have studied here as young men include Swami Vivekananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Rama Tirtha (among the first swamis to come to America) and Swami Sivananda of Divine Life Society.

The ashram has 100 rooms, 50 for sannyasins and 50 in a separate area for visiting householders, who may stay for a maximum of three days. No women or non-Indians are allowed. All who stay are expected to follow the strict routine of the ashram, attending the morning worship at 5am and each of the classes. If they miss three days in a row, they are asked to leave.

At present the ashram has 50 students, most in their 20s and all sannyasins. Initiation into sannyas is given to anyone providing a written request from their guru. The rites are performed and the saffron robes presented in the name of that guru. There are lectures in Hindi in the morning and evening, each about two hours. The full course of study is three years, after which the sannyasin is expected to leave; no one stays here permanently.

Divine Life Society

The Divine Life Society (#14) was founded by Swami Sivananda in the 1930s, on land gifted to him by Narendra Shah, the then king of this area. Its vast publication program, which distributes practical religious books worldwide, has made it more widely known than Kailas Ashram. Even the king only became familiar with Swami's work when visiting a friend in London, who was reading and benefiting greatly from Sivananda's books published just a few miles from his palace!

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founder of HINDUISM TODAY, recounted how as a young man in California in the 1940s he wrote to the Divine Life Society and received some months later a gift box of books from India. When he wrote to thank them, he received more books. He was deeply impressed with the importance of the printed word, so abundantly distributed; one result is this magazine you hold in your hands.

The Society is a huge place, extending from the banks of the river far up the hill. Spread across the grounds are temples, living quarters, lecture halls, feeding halls, library, bookstore, a large publication facility for print, audio and video, and Yoga Vedanta Academy, which offers a residential course for up to 40 students. Residing here are 100 sannyasins, all initiates in the lineage of Swami

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Kailas Ashram: The famed ashram with its Lingam-shaped roof structure in the background, visible from the main road

Kailas Ashram: Where Swamis Vivekananda and Sivananda came to study

“TO HAVE A TRUE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE IN RISHIKESH, FIRST OF all you must have a bath in Ganga with full devotion. You will benefit tremendously. Second, you must try to attend the satsangs that are conducted by sadhus and mahatmas on the banks of Ganga in the morning and evening as well as at Kailas Ashram, Sivananda Ashram and the ashram of Dandi Swami. Third, you should sit on the banks of Ganga and chant mantras and God's names. Japa on the banks of Ganga is much more beneficial than that done in one's home. Besides these, the pilgrim should avoid consumerist tendencies and not lay too much emphasis on food and drink when here on pilgrimage. This is a spiritual place, and therefore you have to perform spiritual activities here: chanting, fire worship, bathing in Ganga and giving to the sadhus and the poor. By continuously engaging in these devotional activities, inside we will feel clean, experience the divine power inside and help to connect with our inner self.

“In Rishikesh, sadhana, satsang and tourism activities take place side by side, with

tourism increasing. I think the Uttarakhand government must ensure that the spiritual character of Rishikesh is maintained. So far as the saints are concerned, our job is also to educate. For fun and material pleasures, tourists should go to Goa or other hill stations which are visited for fun, frolic and entertainment.

“Today we have all the material comforts of life, but still we are not living a peaceful life. If peace is not there, then all that we have becomes of no use. Here at Kailas Ashram we try to teach you how to be happy in life with whatever you have. We teach you how to be happy in your day-to-day life. Whatever you are doing in life is okay. You may be married or unmarried, come from various places and follow different traditions. But the purpose of life is still to become happy. Only knowledge can make you happy, says the *Bhagavad Gita*. It says there is nothing more valuable than knowledge. Knowledge is the purest thing, a godly element and it should be earned. Through knowledge, we find the techniques of simple living by which we can be happy.”

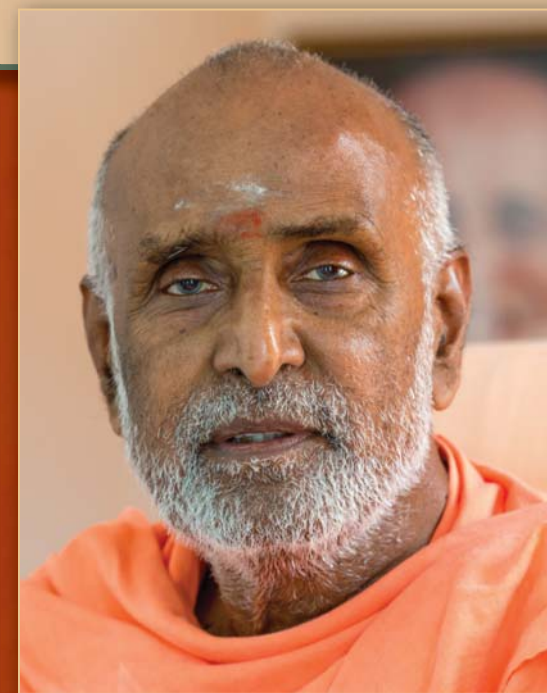


Swami Pragyanand: Manager, Kailas Ashram, Rishikesh





Divine Life Society: One of the original ashrams of Rishikesh



(counterclockwise from left) Some of the Divine Life Society's facilities; a daily darshan session with Swami Vimalananda, DLS president; Swami Padmanabhananda, DLS General Secretary; pilgrims await their turn to worship at the samadhi shrine of Swami Sivananda

Here we met Omar Djezeini, a technical translator from Beirut on his 29th visit to Rishikesh and a disciple of Swami Chidananda Saraswati, the previous DLS president. "He used to call me Hari Omar," he related, "I met him by the grace of God and now he is always with me. He embedded in my system the philosophy and beauty of this place. I am not following any religion to the letter, but I am a humble disciple of Swami Chidananda and Swami Sivananda. There is a lot of grace here, but you have to tap it in your mind. If you are sincere enough, then divine force will guide you. This is an ideal place, especially in this Kali Yuga."

Swami Dayananda Ashram

Swami Dayananda Ashram (#30) is located in the Sheesham Jhadi area, an unexpected mix of residential houses and ashrams. The three-acre ashram was founded in the 1960s by Swami Dayananda, the famed teacher of Vedanta who also founded the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam of Coimbatore and Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania. A medium-size facility with 160 rooms available, it is focused on teaching rather than providing accommodations for pilgrims. As at Kailas Ashram, many people coming here to learn are not necessarily associated with the sampradaya. Instruction is in English, rather than the Hindi of Kailas Ashram. There are 10 to 12 sannyasins stationed here, two or three of whom are

teaching and rest doing their own sadhana. A hired staff of 50 handle management and upkeep.

This ashram hosts the teaching programs of other swamis, who may come with two to three hundred students at a time. During our visit, for example, there was a large group led by Radha Krishna of the World Community Service Centre, an organization founded by Vedatri Maharishi of Chennai and unconnected with Swami Dayananda.

One participant in that program, social worker Yamuna Rani from Chennai, shared her feelings: "I get a lot of peace when I am here. Every day I go sit on the banks of Ganga and meditate in the morning and evening. I feel so spiritually uplifted that I do not want to leave. I am leading a completely stress free life here. I am not even bothered by any thought of my home or family. One big change here in Rishikesh is that my sleep is very sound and good. Back at home I could not sleep properly even if I took so many sleeping pills."

According to Swami Shantatmananda Saraswati, the resident acharya and a disciple of Swami Dayananda, the ashram has 30 resident students doing a one-year course in Vedanta. Most of these are aged 30 to 55, with a lesser number below 30. "We teach Sanskrit and Vedanta right from scratch," he explained, "then take them to the advanced level and discuss how Adi Shankara and our





own Guruji thought. We do this in a concentrated way, without any dilution.”

While they do teach some yoga and meditation, Swami explained, their focus is Vedanta. The ashram has a Siva temple with worship in South Indian style, a school with 450 students and a charitable dispensary.

“Rishikesh is actually a place for knowledge,” Swami Shantatmananda told us. “It is not a place for pilgrimage, but a place for sadhus, sannyasins and brahmacharis to come, do their sadhana and gain knowledge.” He lamented the development of tourism in the area and said many sadhus long for the peace and calmness of the past. “Today the whole place has become extremely crowded. If a sadhu wants to go to Ram Jhula to have a holy bath, he has to think ten times and look around to see how many people are there before he takes the bath. We cannot go back to the past, but at least the sentiments and emotions of the people here should be respected. The entire culture of this country is being kept upright by the sadhus here.”

Parmarth Niketan

Parmarth Niketan (#21) and its present head, Swami Chidananda Saraswati (Muniji), are known the world over for its well-attended

evening Ganga Aarti, annual yoga festivals, Ganga cleaning initiative and other environmental campaigns, the *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* project and, most recently, its disaster relief efforts in Uttarakhand.

Muniji himself is arguably the most popular and charismatic swami-in-residence in Rishikesh, with devoted followers ranging from the rich and famous to the poor and unnoticed. In keeping with tradition he is available for darshan most days without an appointment. In his simple backyard garden one can find politicians, Bollywood stars, wealthy entrepreneurs and even royalty sitting on the floor seeking spiritual insight. Muniji is highly respected by the local population as well; he has championed their causes in the face of outside political pressure and influence.

Parmarth Niketan lies just downstream from the Ram Jhula bridge. It is a huge facility, with spacious gardens and more than 1,000 rooms. Twenty sannyasins live here, and the ashram's gurukulam has 160 students and 15 teachers.

Asked about the ever-increasing level of activity in Rishikesh, Muniji offered, “Even in all this noise in Rishikesh, the lamp of spirituality is still burning strong. It is the respon-

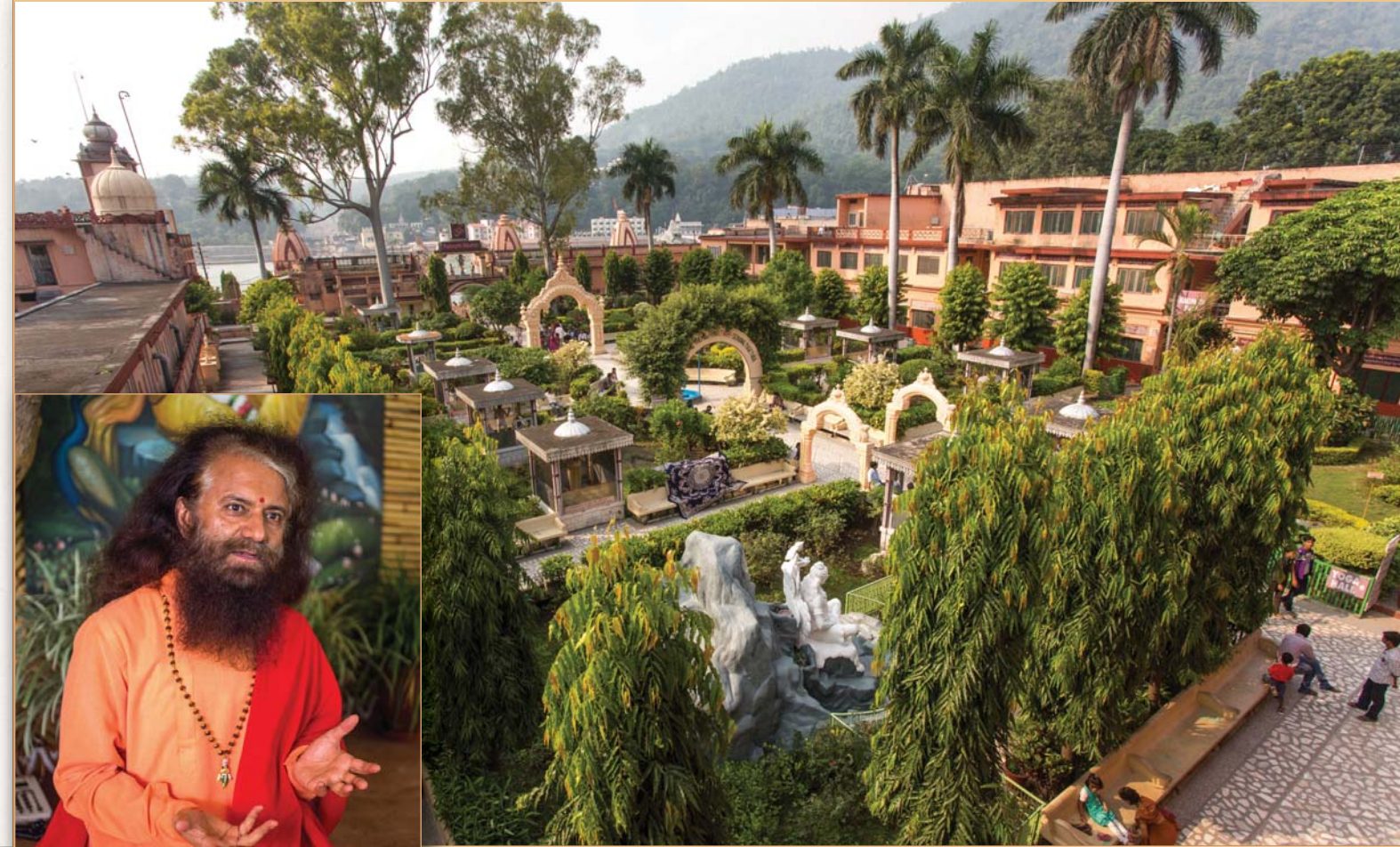
sibility of all of us to keep it that way. Most who come to stay with us are spiritual people, but even those who come as tourists shift their attitude in the atmosphere here when they meet and interact with us. Let the youth come for rafting, and then let us do the drafting which will influence their life forever.”

Asked for her thoughts, Muniji's assistant, Sadhvi Bhagwati Saraswati, said, “People are not coming to Rishikesh for untouched nature, there are coming for something deeper, an energy that is untouched, in pure form. It would be an underestimation of that divine power to say a cyber cafe, coffee shop or rafting can undo it.”

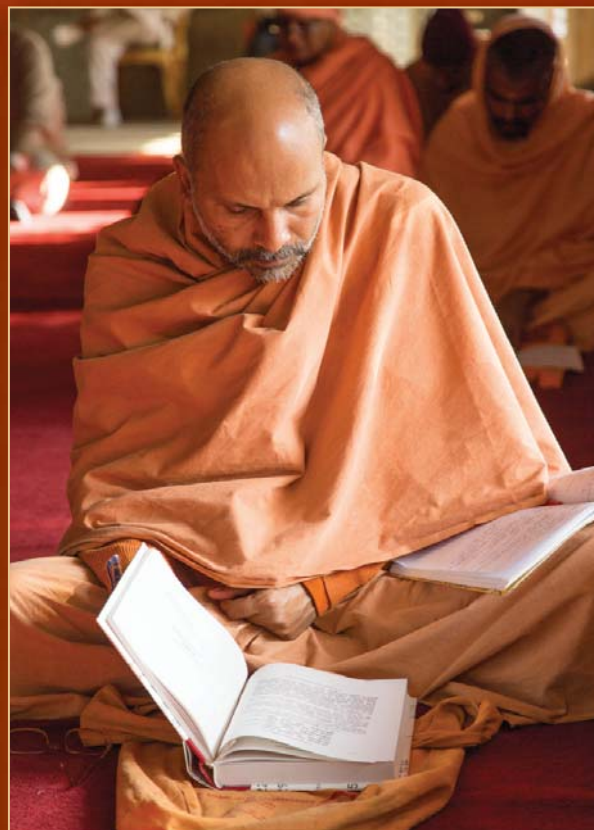
Swami Omkarananda Ashram

This ashram (#16), founded by Paramahansa Swami Omkarananda, is a well-funded

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Sacred spaces: (clockwise from top right) The spacious gardens of Parmarth Niketan; (inset) Muniji; heavily weathered ancient sculpture indicates the true age of Bharat Temple, otherwise recently renovated; Siva temple at Swami Dayananda Ashram; sadhu in study at Kailas Ashram; library at Swami Dayananda Ashram.



Teach, Learn, Pray: Knowledge & devotion are the town's stock in trade



ALL PHOTOS: DEV RAJ AGARWAL

institution, unusual in that all its trustees and managers are of European origin, though now Indian citizens. Following their guru's instructions, the ashram's focus is on karma yoga, selfless service, and it is popular with the local populace for its involvement in many charitable and welfare projects that benefit the people. It runs dozens of public schools and degree-granting colleges in Rishikesh and the surrounding hill country of Uttarakhand.

The ashram owns substantial land and buildings in Rishikesh which it rents out to other organizations. Additionally, a large air-conditioned auditorium—a facility currently lacking in Rishikesh—is now under construction in their vast complex. The swamis feel the holy city will benefit immensely from the ability to host big national and international spiritual events. Their popular yoga center is run by Usha Mata Ji, a senior disciple of Yogacharya BKS Iyenger. Students apply months ahead to get into her classes.

One of Usha's students, Elain Tan Siew Keow of Singapore, is a Buddhist and a yoga teacher. She shared that she had found no other place in India as peaceful as Rishikesh. "Even now I spend hours and hours on the banks of Ganga and experience true peace,

quietness of mind and bliss every day."

Another student, Markus Eniger, an engineer from Germany, shared Elain's reverence for Ganga and added, "Rishikesh has a very nice community, like a stream of people who want to evolve, who want to go on the spiritual path, find themselves, improve and change. This is good vibe and good energy. That is why I like it here."

Omkarananda Ashram has 14 temples in Rishikesh dedicated to various Gods. The popular Omkarananda Kamakshi Devi Mandir, built mostly in the South Indian tradition and kept spotlessly clean, is unique here. It is one of the few temples where dance—traditionally one of the 16 parts of puja worship—is featured. Worshipful dance is offered regularly by Kumari Somashekhari, the ashram's dance instructor, and her students.

"My advice to foreigners here," said ashram president Swami Vishweshwarananda, "is to go deeper and deeper. India has produced the greatest saints on the planet. Go through their holy books. If you want to pursue your interest in spirituality, then try to find a good guru. Try to lead a life which is full of purity if you want to experience the Vedic system which India produced thousands and thousands of years ago. Rishikesh is still very much a place

where serious sadhana is being done. I think we have a bright future ahead."

Swami Rama Sadhaka Grama

The spacious campus of the Swami Rama Sadhaka Grama—literally, "village of spiritual seekers"—and Sadhana Mandir Trust lies on the outskirts of Rishikesh. Founded by Swami Rama (1925–1996) and built in 2001, it is a world-class facility which provides an ideal and serene environment in which to learn Vedanta and meditation. Others in Rishikesh term it a preferred place to learn meditation. It is patronized by a wide range of people from other countries.

Overseen by Swami Veda Bharati, this is a strict ashram. The daily schedule begins with a 4:15 am wake-up bell and 5:00 am prayer, continuing through an intense day of yoga, meditation and classes and ending with 9:00 pm prayers. Its huge library is a personal project of Swami.

Now 80 years old, Bharati met Swami Rama in 1969 while a professor of South Asian Studies at the University of Minnesota in the US; in 1973 he retired to pursue his guru's mission full time. According to his biography, he now runs 60 meditation groups in 25 countries. Currently in poor health and

observing silence, Swami communicated with us by typing on his computer.

The Meditation Research Institute was created here in 2005 "to bring together the perennial wisdom of the Himalayan traditions and contemporary science. The main objective is to document the various meditative techniques of these traditions and to test their effectiveness with scientific tools." People of all religions come here to learn meditation—including, according to Swami, "Christian missionary trainees by the hundreds" as well as Sufis, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and others, each taught according to their own tradition.

Krishna Kumar Uperati, a resident, explained, "Technically speaking, according to Swami Veda Bharati, we do not teach meditation. We prepare the seekers to evolve their instrument of body, mind and soul to a level where they can catch the vibrations that lead to a higher level of consciousness."

Phool Chatti Ashram

Twelve kilometers upstream, along the footpath pilgrims would historically take to Badrinath, is the 128-year-old Phool Chatti Ashram headed by Swami Devaswaroopananda. This is a popular destination

for those looking for a retreat in the lap of Himalayas. The ashram, which can accommodate 200 to 500 pilgrims at a time, has an ancient Siva temple and a commodious yoga and meditation hall. The ashram's yoga center, under the guidance of Yogacharya Sadhvi Lalita Nand, is popular with foreign women who come and stay here for an extended time to learn India's ancient sciences. Swami expressed concern about the increased camping and rafting activities on Ganga. Not far from his ashram is a commercial camping site, and another is being set up even closer. He feels the consumption of liquor and nonvegetarian food is spoiling the area.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

Back in the Swargashram area we searched out what is certainly the most world-famous place in Rishikesh: the now-abandoned ashram of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, where the Beatles stayed briefly in 1968. The ashram (#25) was built on land leased from Rajaji National Park. The government declined to renew the lease when it expired in 1981 and reclaimed the land in the mid 1990s. Today, locked up and falling apart, it still attracts the occasional visitors wanting to see the Yogi's first ashram.

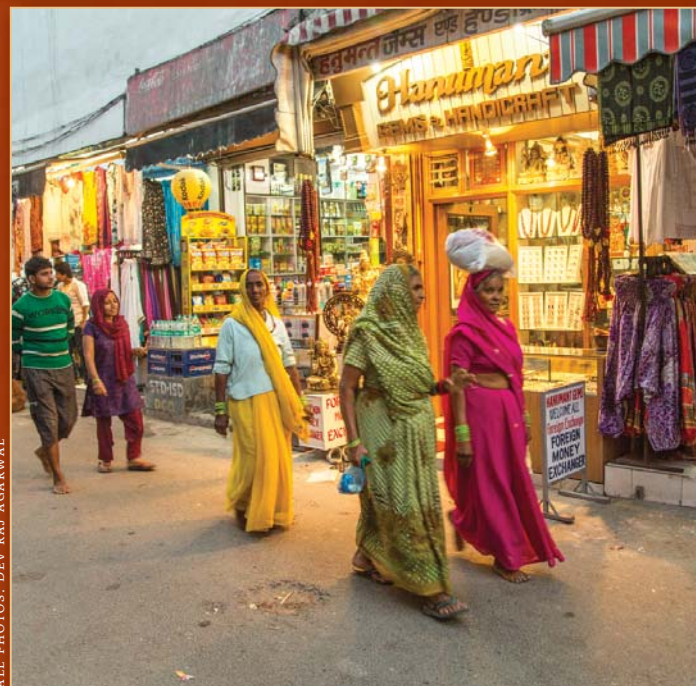
PILGRIM LODGINGS

MANY OF THE LARGER ASHRAM facilities in Rishikesh offer lodging for pilgrims as well as short- and long-term housing for sadhus. Most of these are by no means luxurious; that niche is taken up by the yoga centers catering to foreigners. These are places the poorest pilgrim can stay.

Baba Kali Kamli Wale Atma Prakash Ashram (#20) is located just a few hundred yards downstream from Ram Jhula bridge, explained manager Shri Gangadhar. The founder, Baba Kali Kamli Wale Ji—so called because he wore a black blanket—was a key force in improving the infrastructure in Rishikesh in the early 1900s. He insisted that facilities be provided for the Char Dham pilgrims and worked to improve the roads. One of his disciples, Swami Atmaprakashananda, opened a free feeding place for sadhus on the opposite side of the river; Swami Sivananda came there for food during the time he was doing *tapasya*.

Continuing this tradition, the ashram maintains over 100 cottages for sadhus, providing them with food and medical care, and some 140 rooms for ordinary pilgrims, most

Varied faces: Temples, yoga, free feedings and.... shopping



(left to right) The popular and immaculately clean South Indian style Omkarananda Kamakshi Devi Mandir; (inset left) Usha Mata, Omkarananda Ashram's yoga teacher; (inset right) Swami Vishweshwarananda; in recent years, large shopping districts have developed on both sides of the river; a family prepares fried puris for pilgrims staying at Baba Kali Kamli Wali ashram

of whom are on a shoestring budget—a family of a dozen might share a single large room.

Shri Ved Singh and his family operate a free *bhandara* on the premises, capable of feeding hundreds at once. We found the food excellent; it included some popular North Indian delicacies. The ashram has shops which sell daily necessities to tourists and pilgrims.

Shri Sant Sewa Ashram, under Shri Mahant Govind Das Ji, is a venerable and popular ashram near Lakshman Jhula which serves low-budget tourists and pilgrims. The mahant expressed appreciation for those who come to Rishikesh: “More than our Indian tourists and pilgrims, the foreigners patronize us to learn about our culture. Many of them wear traditional Indian dress and rudraksha mala. They have a keen interest in our way of worshiping. I am touched to see how they praise Hinduism and take a bath in Ganga with so much devotion.”

Another example of simple living is the **Bhagirathi Dham Ashram**, a large facility right on the banks of Ganga. The manager, Swami Gyanananda, said their ashram is open to any true seeker who wants to pilgrimage to Rishikesh and do sadhana. “We deal with people according to their personality and background in terms of spiritual advancement and give them a program that fits them individually, as judged by our guru. This ashram is completely for sadhana.”

“Before setting out on pilgrimage,” Swami said, “one must study scripture. On pilgrimage, we should not keep in touch with family, nor bother about having a luxurious lifestyle. If you are looking for such facilities, then where is the spirit of pilgrimage?”

SMALL ASHRAMS AND YOGA CENTERS

RISHIKESH HAS BECOME AN UNLIKELY mix of facilities ranging from high-end boutique accommodations for foreigners to the simple huts of sadhus along the river. One cannot, however, categorically judge the more plush of these as the less spiritual. No doubt one does find here a few teachers more interested in money than spirituality, but most, Indians and foreigners alike, are dedicated servants and seekers of God. In the central areas such as Swargashram and the two bridges, advertisements are posted for hundreds of local yoga centers which can be found in every nook and cranny of the town.

Yogalaya Ashram, founded by Spanish national Swami Tilak Ji Paramhansa, is located in Ganga Vatika, an upscale area of the Muni ki-Reti area. It is the main monastic training center for the Vedic Foundation. One apartment houses a beautiful temple; the current guru, Swami Shankar

Tilakananda, lives in an adjacent apartment. He was traveling during our visit; but when in residence, he is available daily to devotees.

Half a dozen nearby apartments are rented out by the day as guest houses. These well-appointed and scrupulously clean apartments are booked mostly by Western pilgrims looking for a more luxurious and homelike environment than is available at the main ashrams.

Two resident senior disciples, Brahmachari Vedanta Chaitanya and Brahmacharini Disha Chaitanya, offered details on the ashram’s programs. The day here begins with a meditation session from 5:30 to 7:00 am. They teach meditation, various forms of yoga, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Brahma Sutras*, *Upanishads* and also Ayurveda marma therapy, based on pressure points on the body.

Vedanta Chaitanya told us: “We have a program called Ganga Yoga under which we take people to different parts of Haridwar and Rishikesh. We have them take a bath which helps them release the results of their past karma and leads to good karmas. This is done with proper chanting of mantras accompanied with the practice of meditation.”

This ashram formally brings people into the Hindu religion along the same lines established in the 1980s by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami. This “ethical conversion” process requires the candidate to

demonstrate a deep understanding of the faith they are leaving, a deep understanding of Hinduism and the reasons they are changing. “If someone wants to embrace Vedic dharma, we offer the same serious process as developed by Subramuniyaswami. Those who are serious have to study and then take examination based on their studies. If they are found to be prepared, then only is the process completed. The process is not done just because they want it. They need to qualify for it.”

Brahmacharini Disha offered insight into the lure of Rishikesh: “Foreigners come from all over the world, but mainly North America and Europe. They do not come to study a particular subject, but rather to seek peace in their lives, to get some relief from their suffering and pain. They find we have some tools that can offer them such relief. We offer them a guru, scriptures and sadhana. I feel that even in today’s time if you are a true seeker you can find the real Rishikesh, which can give you what you are looking for, but you will have to search it out yourself.”

Yogacharya Swami Sudhirananda runs a yoga center in a hall of Omkarananda Deepeshwar Mandir in the Lakshman Jhula area. When we visited early one morning, he was engaged with a class of foreigners from 18 different countries. “In one month’s time,” Swami said, “we make them a yoga teacher.

We charge them US\$1,325 for the one-month course. Half of this is for their lodging and food, and part is spent on the rent of this hall. After every course is complete, we spend thousands of dollars on bhandaras, free community meals for pilgrims.”

“We try to complete all the eight parts of ashtanga yoga in one month. The main benefit these foreigners get is physical and mental health and strength. Once the mind becomes powerful, and we stop focusing on pain in the body, we become wise and start to realize the true Self.”

Asked his advice for pilgrims, Swami said, “The first thing to be done after coming to Rishikesh is to have a bath in Ganga. If this is not done, coming to Rishikesh is useless. Once you have that bath, you will feel you have come to heaven.”

The 25-room **Nirvana Hotel** is part boutique hotel, part ashram, offering both spa facilities and yoga classes. One of their teaching gurus, Acharya Shri Maharishi, explained that his role is to initiate people in kriya yoga meditation with an intense regime of training. On Rishikesh in general, he observed, “It has all kinds of ashrams and saints, some famous, others working silently, and I think all are doing a good job. We should not view this activity of teaching as commercialization. In the ancient past, seekers used to learn and pay something in exchange for what they

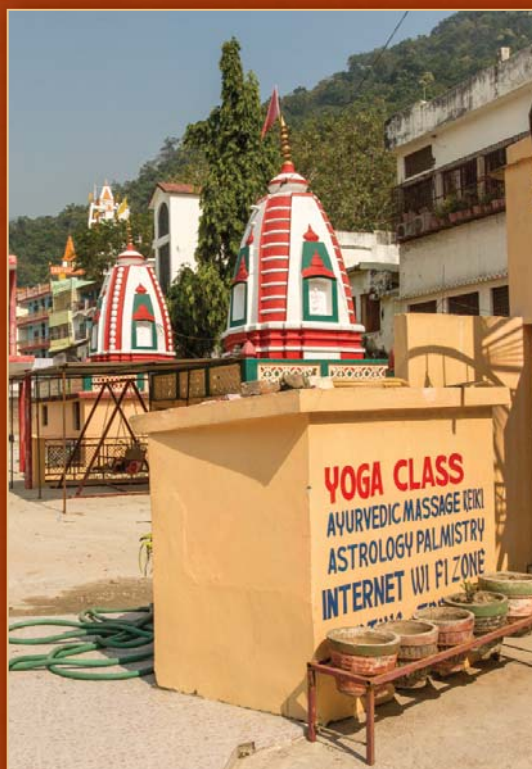
learned. Calling it mere commerce today is not fair. With the changing times, there are changes in this area of learning also.”

IN CONCLUSION

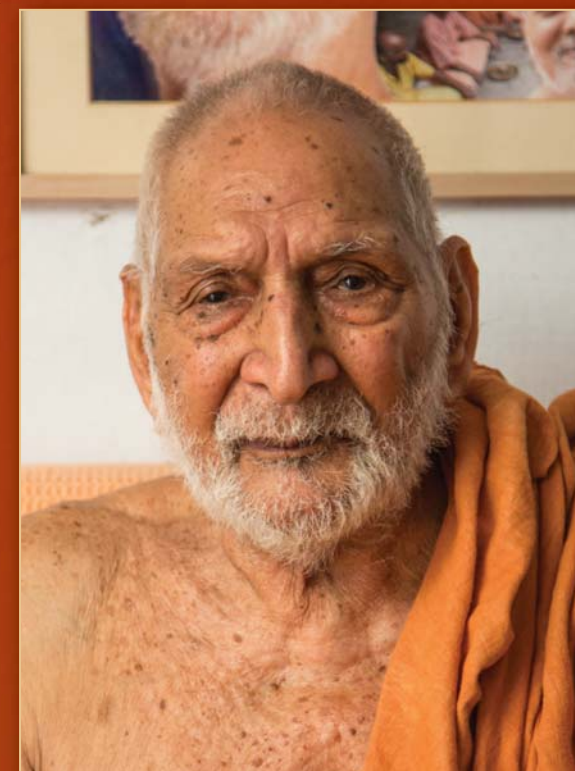
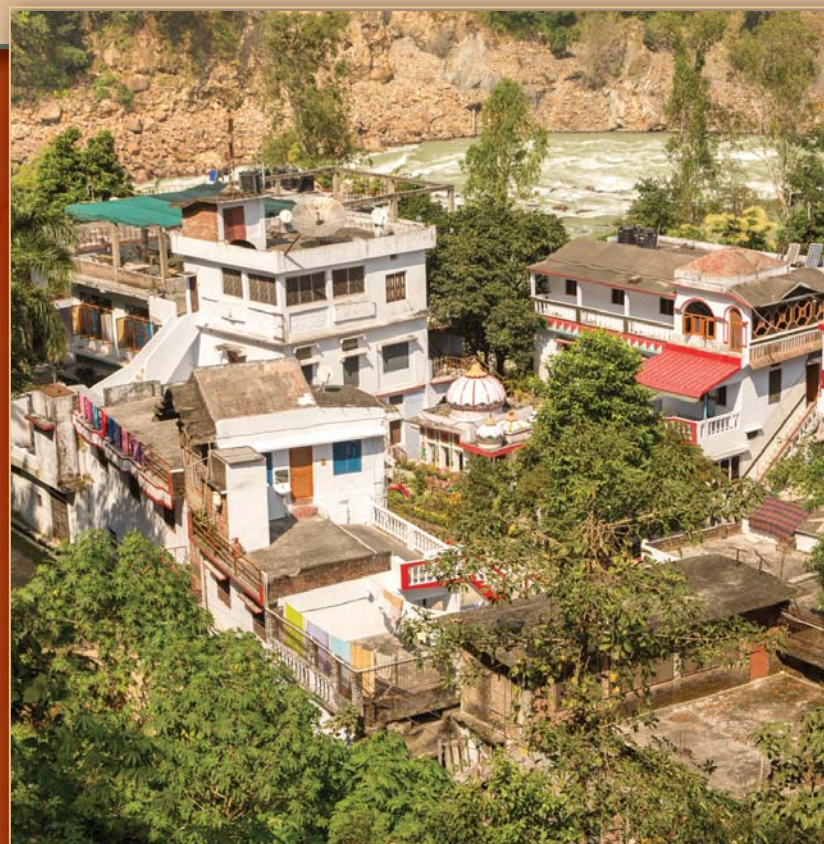
LATE ONE EVENING WE REACHED THE simple cottage of 105-year-old saint **Dandi Swami Maharaj** on the banks of the Ganga, a high point of our adventure. Here we found the popular ideal of Rishikesh: an enlightened sage sitting on an elevated wooden platform in a humble building, giving his evening discourse to all who draw near. Quoting from the *Gita*, *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, Swami explained to his 30 listeners how one should live in this world in a correct and ethical manner.

Asked for a few words of wisdom for HINDUISM TODAY’s readers, Swami offered: “We saints do not pray just for the welfare of Rishikesh but for the whole world. Our prayer to God is ‘Let all mankind be happy.’ The whole humanity must prosper, be blessed and never experience any sorrow. Dharma should be victorious and adharma should be destroyed. If you truly seek a realized saint, you can definitely find him. Once you come to know about such a saint, you must visit him again and again, because truth is known when you meet him and listen to him repeatedly.”

Rich & Poor: The logistics of low and high-budget travel



(left to right) Like Starbucks in Seattle, yoga entrepreneurs here in Rishikesh know that free WiFi is a draw for customers; students in a yoga class at Deepeshwar Mandir practice purvattanasa in the system of Pattabhi Jois; the Phool Chatti ashram about 12 km above Rishikesh; 105-year-old Dandi Swami Maharaj





PHOTOS: DEV RAJ AGARWAL

Our well-protected team and guests running the rapids above Rishikesh on their way down Ganga

Rafting the Ganga: Sacrilege or Worship? One Thing for Sure, It's Thrilling!

In recent years, boating several miles down the Ganga from above Rishikesh has become an increasingly popular—and controversial—activity. HINDUISM TODAY decided it best for journalist Rajiv Malik and photographer Dev Raj Agarwal to find out what it was like.

By Rajiv Malik

Rafting in Ganga in Rishikesh was a first for me, and turned into the experience of a lifetime. Initially, I was conflicted about it, having just interviewed saints who were strongly opposed to it and others who did not see the harm.

We started from Shivpuri, about 20 kilometers upstream and reached Rishikesh in two-and-a-half hours at a cost of US\$25 each. It was pure, unadulterated fun.

Throughout the journey photographer Dev Raj Agarwal and I kept shouting and chanting "Har Har Gange" and "Aum Namah Shivaya." Even the Brazilian couple who shared our boat—it is hardly a "raft"—joined in. We greeted the fellow pilgrims and tourists in the boats ahead of us by shouting "Har Har Gange," while they responded to us enthusiastically with the same chant. At least for those we encountered, this was a sacred experience.

Along the whole route I felt one with Ganga, with the mountains on each side and all of nature. The scenes my eyes were capturing made my soul joyful. Then there is the sheer power of the river. You can get some sense of this from the banks, but can truly experience it only as you are tossed about in the rapids.

There were moments when I delved into deep meditative silence as I felt that Mother Ganga was showering her blessings with water that was falling on me as we

crossed the rapids and cut through the waves. The whole scenario was breathtaking, mystical and magical. By the time I was back in Rishikesh, I felt completely blissful. I had developed a very close connection with Mother Ganga. She was so kind, affectionate, loving and caring towards me when I was in Her lap for over two hours which passed like minutes.

By Dev Raj Agarwal

I feel like a humble little creature as I float down the Ganges in a blue colored raft, ferrying me to Rishikesh from some distance up the river. I am seeing my reverence for the holy Ganga from a new perspective. Not only do I feel energized in body and soul, I am overwhelmed by the stature and power of this river as all my senses seem to have been replenished with fresh energy. Also, Ma Ganga has displayed her Rudra Roop (form as the Destroyer) to me, as I almost fall out from the bouncing raft on the "Golf Course," the giant rapids (grade 3 on a scale of 4) which can overpower any human might.

Looking around from the view point of the river has not only unfolded the divine view of the Himalayas from the perspective of the water itself, but has also explained to me why rishis and saints down the ages have opted to spend their lives here. This is the physical energy of the Ganga, never displayed to human beings, but enough to explain why Lord Siva Himself was called to hold her waters in His coiled hair, as she landed on the Earth. For me, the river has been personified after this ride and my belief in her as a source of life has increased. The spirit of the river dwells here, not on the sleepy and sometimes unclean ghats downstream.

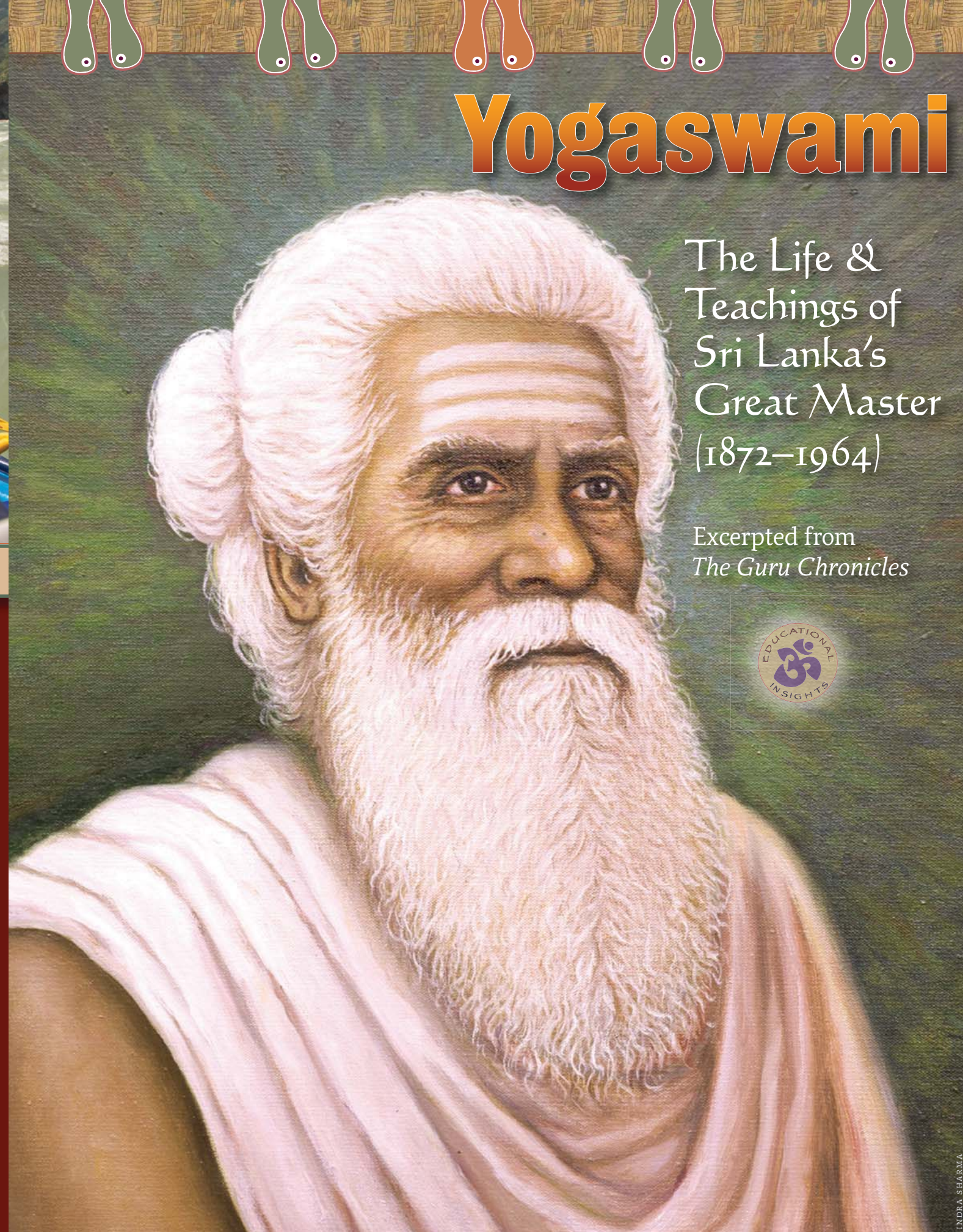


Dev Raj and Rajiv (at right) at end of the run

Yogaswami

The Life & Teachings of Sri Lanka's Great Master (1872–1964)

Excerpted from *The Guru Chronicles*





The Lion of Lanka

Holding Truth in the palm of his hand, he spread love and knowledge of Siva

HE STRODE POWERFULLY ALONG THE ROADS AND FIELDS OF HIS island each day, and those who saw him coming would move warily to the other side, avoiding the man whose look and voice could pierce the soul and shake the spirit of anyone he met. The white-haired, dark-skinned sage knew their thoughts, and sometimes spoke them aloud. He saw their future, and not infrequently intimated what lay ahead. If you didn't want to know your inmost Self, you didn't want to meet Yogaswami on the roadside.

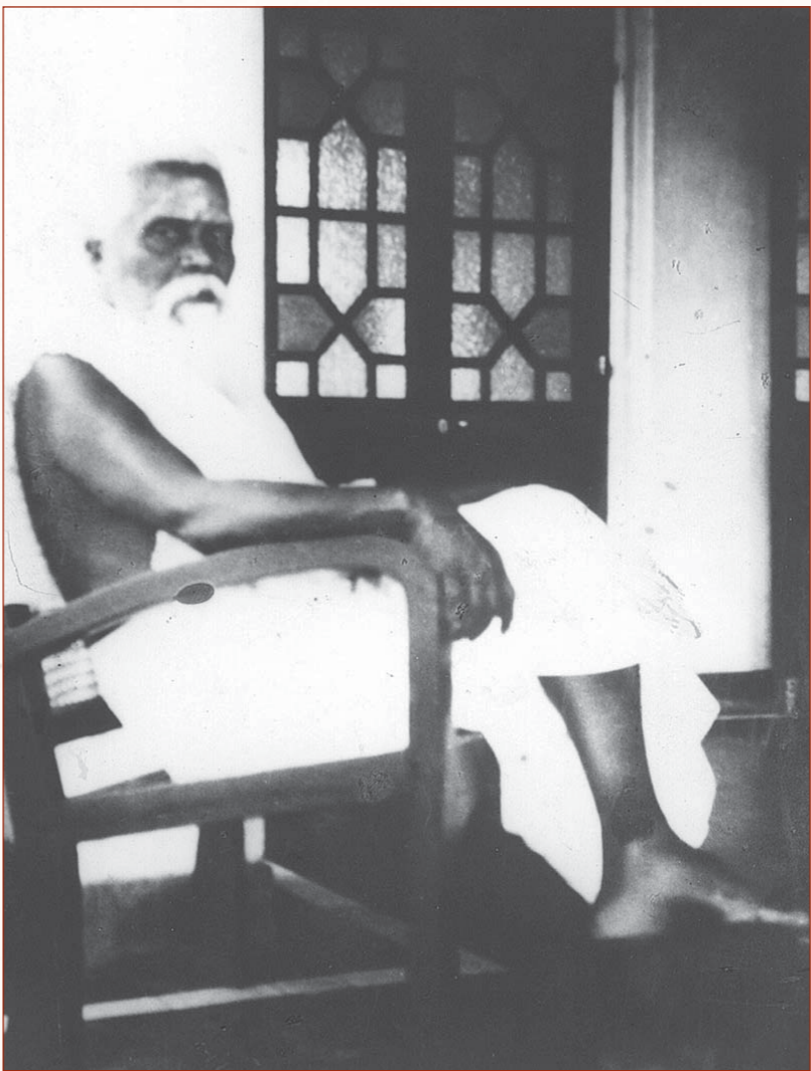
He dressed in white cotton veshti and lived simply, immersed not in things of this world but in an expanded consciousness of the timeless, formless, spaceless Self, Parasiva. Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and even atheists sought his wisdom, whether it be delivered with heart-melting love or heart-stopping power. It was 142 years ago that Sage Yogaswami, the satguru of Lanka's Tamil Hindus for half a century, was born. Inwardly, it is believed, he continues to guide his followers, now scattered around the globe. He is mother, father and guru.

Each morning in his austere hut with its cow-dung floor, Yogaswami would rise before the sun and light camphor to drive the night outside. His daily worship was conducted at a small shrine that held the holy sandals of his satguru, Chellappaswami. He would offer a few flowers to the tiruvadi and light an oil lamp. Soon devotees would arrive, eager to catch him early, before he marched out on the roads, for he would daily walk 20 to 40 miles, alone. He continued this regimen into his eighties. Devotees lucky enough to find him at home morning or evening would quietly come forward, prostrate, touch his feet and wait for his invitation to sit on the woven mats. At his gesture they would sing, usually from the Thevarams, his own Natchintanai songs and other Tamil scriptures and mystic poems.

Tiru T. Sangarappillai Thirunelveli, a Sri Lankan teacher, vividly remembered the ashram during its height in the 1940s and 1950s. "I used to go early in the morning. I would see hand carts, bullock carts and motor cars all lined up on the road. Many would come out bearing fruits, fruit trays and paper bags. Others would enter, taking milk and fruits. On one side people would worship. On the other people would chant the Tamil Vedas. People would wait patiently outside, unable to enter. Inside people would be seated in silence. Such was the sight of the devotees. He would shower his grace on each one. He would sit in perfect silence; then he would sing. He would ask the devotees near him to sing. On many occasions I stayed the night. At times we could sleep only after midnight. Even then, Gunathan would wake up by four, perform his ablutions and sit in deep meditation. After his meditation, he would worship God with divine songs. In this way his humble ashram slowly became known as a temple to a living God."

You Are Not these Flesh and Bones

Sage Yogaswami passed his early days in search of God and lived his later life in union with Him [see timeline below]. His devotional and contemplative nature blossomed early on. Even in his childhood he rushed to the temple, cried tears of joy during worship and eagerly undertook penance, such as rolling around the temple in the hot sun. As a young adult he vowed himself to celibacy and renounced a place in his father's business because it did not allow him time to meditate and study the scriptures he loved so deeply. Around 1890 he found a quiet job as a storekeeper for an irrigation project in Kili-nochchi. Here he lived like a yogi, often meditating all night long. He demanded utter simplicity of himself, and purity. Purity would



SAMY PASUPATTI

Darshan: On the porch of a devotee's home on K.K.S. Road, Jaffna, 1950.

be what he later called on all his devotees to achieve—in mind, speech and action. What appeared to others as incomprehensible austerities were to Yogaswami the natural, necessary and even blissful strivings which brought him ever closer to God, whom he called Siva. Yet, all of this was just a rudimentary preparation for the life he would live with his satguru.

Yogaswami's satguru, Chellappaswami, was intense, unpredictable, unfathomable. Once Yogaswami related to a devotee, "If it were you, you would not have lasted one day with Chellappa." Yogaswami lived over five years with him, from 1905 to 1911. At another time, a devotee said to Yogaswami, "Chellappaswami has gone away, but he gave everything to you." Yogaswami at once clarified the process of his guru's "giving," "Did I receive it freely?" he retorted. "I obtained it by digging up a mountain!" Chellappaswami's outward appearance was that of a rumpled vagrant. He would speak to himself and shout at those who passed by. He ate with the crows. Very few people recognized or acknowledged his divine stature. Thus, when Yogaswami began to follow Chellappaswami as a disciple, he was also deemed a madman, a guise not uncommon among masters of the Natha Sampradaya.

Yogaswami knew, however, that the day-to-day life that most people led could not give him the Truth he sought. With his guru he joyfully denied himself the most basic of physical needs, including food, shelter and sleep, and ultimately transcended all of them. After Chellappaswami's passing in 1911, Yogaswami spent years in intense tapas under an olive (illuppai) tree. The junction at the illuppai tree in the small village of Columbuthurai was well trafficked, so Yogaswami always kept stones at his side to persuade the curious to move on. His practice during this period was to meditate for three days and nights in the open without moving about or taking shelter from the weather.

A Masterly Life: 1872-1964

At 3:30am on a Wednesday in May of 1872, a son was born to Ambalavanar and Chinnachi Amma not far from the Kandaswamy temple in Maviddapuram, Sri Lanka. He was named Sadasivan. His mother died before he reached age 10, and his aunt and uncle raised him.

In his school days he was bright but independent, often studying alone high in the mango trees. After finishing school,

he joined government service as a storekeeper in the irrigation department and served for years in the verdant backwoods of Kilinochchi.

The decisive point of his life came when he

encountered his guru outside Nallur Temple. As he walked along the road, Sage Chellappan, a disheveled sadhu, shook the bars from within the chariot shed where he camped and shouted

loudly at the passing brahmachari, "Hey! Who are you?" Sadasivan was transfixed by that simple, piercing, inquiry. "There is not one wrong thing!" "It is as it is! Who knows?" the jnani roared, and suddenly everything vanished



ART BY S. RAJAM

in a sea of light. At a later encounter amid a festival crowd, Chellappaswami ordered him, "Go within; meditate; stay here until I return." He came back

three days later to find Yogaswami still waiting for his master.

Yogaswami surrendered himself completely to his guru, walking often to

Nallur Temple to be with the master. Life for him became one of intense spiritual discipline, severe austerity and stern trials.

One such trial was a continuous meditation which Chellappaswami demanded of Sadasivan and fellow aspirant Katiravelu in 1910. For 40 days and nights the two disciples sat upon a large flat rock. Chellappaswami came each day and gave them only tea or water. On the morning of the fortieth day, the guru cooked a meal—but instead of feeding the hungry yogis, he threw the food high in the

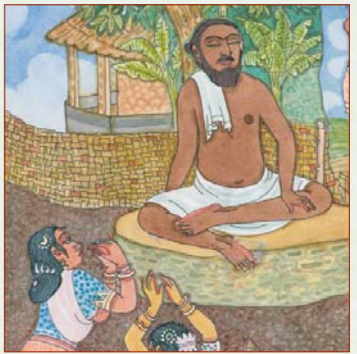
air, proclaiming, "That's all I have for you. Two elephants cannot be tied to one post." It was his way of saying two powerful men cannot reign in one place. Following this ordination, he sent

the initiates in different directions. Katiraveluswami was not seen again, and it was thought he went to South India. Yogaswami began the life of the wandering ascetic, begging for his



food, visiting temples and chanting hymns. He undertook an arduous foot pilgrimage to Kathirgama Temple in the far South. In 1911, after he returned to Jaffna, two devotees witnessed Yogaswami's "coronation." He met with Chellappaswami, who greeted him, saying, "Come! I give the crown of Kingship to you!—for as long as the universe endures."

Chellappaswami passed on in 1911. Yogaswami, obeying his guru's last orders, sat on the



roots of a huge olive tree at Columbuthurai. Under this tree he stayed, exposed to the roughest weather, unmindful of the hardship and serene as ever. This was his home for the next few years. Intent on his

On the fourth day he would walk long distances, then return to the tree to repeat the cycle.

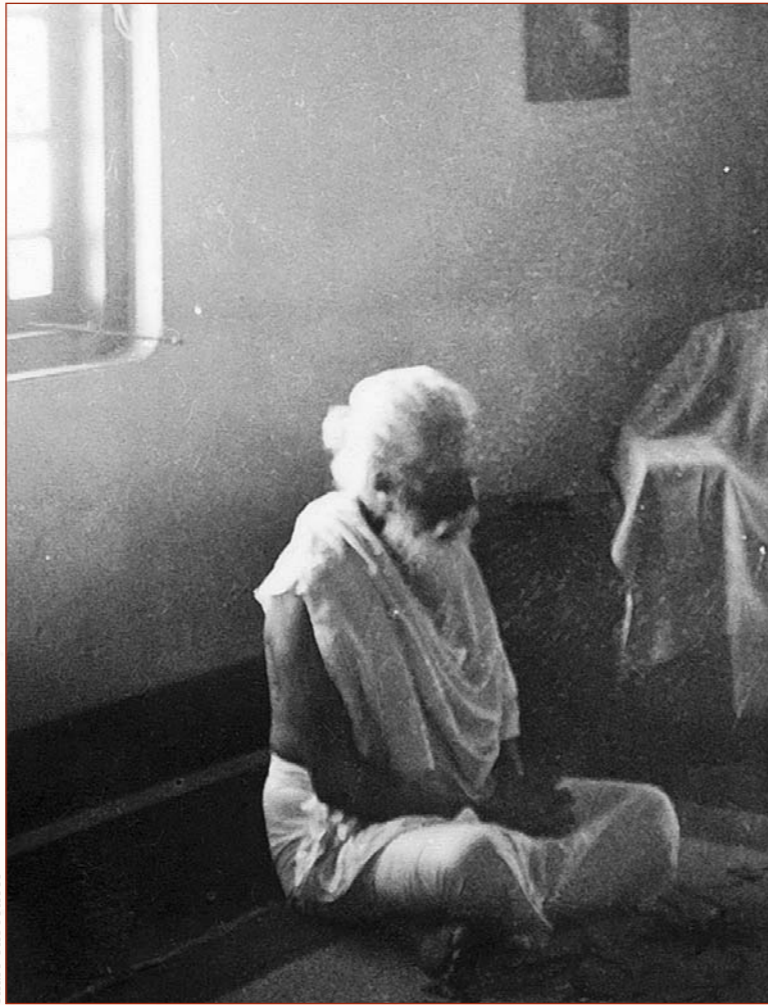
After some years, Yogaswami allowed a few sincere seekers to approach. They worried that his sadhanas were too severe and urged him to take care of himself. Eventually they persuaded the yogi to move into a nearby one-room thatched hut they had built for him. Even here he forbade devotees to revere or care for him. He prohibited anyone even to rethatch the roof. His closest followers would do so only when he was away, being sure to be finished before his return. Holding fast to his self-reliance, he would not even permit a lamp to be lit by another person. Day and night, over the years, Swami was absorbed in his inner worship, guiding the karmas of thousands, down to every detail of a marriage proposal, a health problem or a close follower's business transactions. Politicians would always fall at his feet before embarking on their work. Every Sivaratra he would meditate through the entire night. Devotees described seeing brilliant light in place of Swami's body on these nights. Others were amazed to see him sit statue-like for hours on end. On one occasion which he liked to recall, Swami was seated in perfect stillness, like a stone. A crow flew down and rested several minutes on his head, apparently thinking this was a statue.

Soften Your Heart And Let It Melt

As the years passed, Swami relented a little, permitting his ever-increasing fold to express their natural devotion. He allowed his hut to be cleaned, the snakes removed and a new cow-dung floor installed.

Yogaswami was equally feared and loved. Even his ardent devotees approached him with trepidation, for he somehow knew their innermost thoughts and feelings—the good and otherwise. If their motivation was not pure, he would berate them or pelt them with stones or see they never entered his gate again. He was not a stranger to rough language, using it to keep the wrong people at bay. When one of his disciples

SAMY PASUPATTI



In meditation: One day Yogaswami was visiting a devotee's home, meditating in the early hours of the day. The family's 19-year-old son, Samy Pasupatti, took the photo secretly, but later confessed his unauthorized intrusion. Yogaswami, who had denied all requests for a photo previously, laughed, and told the boy it was done and he could keep it. It became the most famous pose for the great satguru.

complained about his sometimes incendiary temper, he replied, "Is not a big fire necessary to burn so much rubbish?"

Still, even those he rebuked felt blessed, reckoning it a spiritual cleansing. Susunaga Weeraperuma, a Sinhalese Buddhist, recounted that in his Dr. S. Ramanathan Chunnakam recalled a humbling lesson received in 1920. "I went to visit Swami with advocate Somasunderam of Nallur. In my youth I was proficient in sword fighting and similar arts. As a result, I was a little arrogant. While on the way to the ashram, Swami appeared in the middle of the road and felled me. I can never forget this incident. Even martial arts instructors cannot show the proficiency in their hands and legs that Swami displayed. After I got up, Swami took me into his hut and showered me with love. But it was only years later that I understood the divine sport that made me eat the dust on the road to Swami's ashram."

Contemplative Contemporaries

Yogaswami revered and was deeply motivated by other Hindu leaders of his time. In 1889, Swami Vivekananda was received in Jaffna by a large crowd and taken in festive procession along Columbuturai Road. As he neared the illuppai tree where Yogaswami later performed his tapas, Vivekananda stopped the procession and disembarked from his carriage. He explained that this was sacred ground and he preferred to walk past rather than ride. He described the area around the tree as an "oasis in the desert." The next day, the 18-year-old Yogaswami attended Vivekananda's public speech. He later recalled that Vivekananda paced powerfully across the stage and "roared like a lion"—making a deep impression on the young yogi. Vivekananda began his address with "The time is short but the subject is vast." This statement went deep into Yogaswami's psyche. He

அன்பு மனம் அம்மாயுஞ் சிவமே
அரிய சேவகாரஞ் சிவமே
ஒன்பின்புலே விழுந்து சிவமே
ஓதும் நாமந்திரஞ் சிவமே
சென்பிரசாத்திரஞ் சிவமே
சிவாதிக் கருகருக சிவமே
இப்புகாரியல்லாஞ் சிவமே
ஏகானேயாதா திருச்சிவமே.

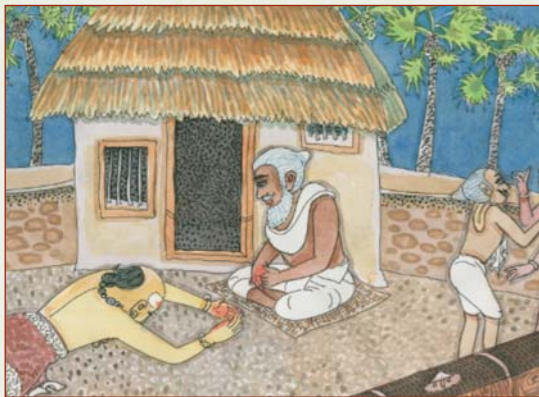
"Don't go halfway to meet difficulties. Face them as they come to you; God is always with you, and that is the greatest news I have for you." YOGASWAMI

repeated it like a mantra to himself and spoke it to devotees throughout his life.

On one occasion, Yogaswami divulged his respect for Mahatma Gandhi. He related, "Two European ladies came to see me. They had been in India to see Mahatma Gandhi and wanted a message from me. I asked them what Gandhi had told them. The Mahatma had said, 'One God, one world.' I told them I could not think of a better message and sent them away." Yogaswami also met the great sage Ramana Maharshi on a pilgrimage to India.

Good Thoughts

Yogaswami articulated his own teachings in over 3,000 poems and songs called Natchintanai, meaning "good thoughts," urging seekers to follow dharma, serve selflessly and realize God within. These gems flowed spontaneously from him, sometimes in a devotee's home, often while seated at the small side shrine to Parvati in a nearby Siva temple he frequented. Any devotee present would write



meditative regimen, he would chase away curious onlookers and worshipful devotees with stones and harsh words. After much persuasion, he was convinced to move into a nearby thatched hut provided by a devotee.

Few recognized his attainment. But this changed significantly one day when he traveled by train from Colombo to Jaffna. An esteemed and scholarly pandit riding in another car repeatedly stated he sensed a "great

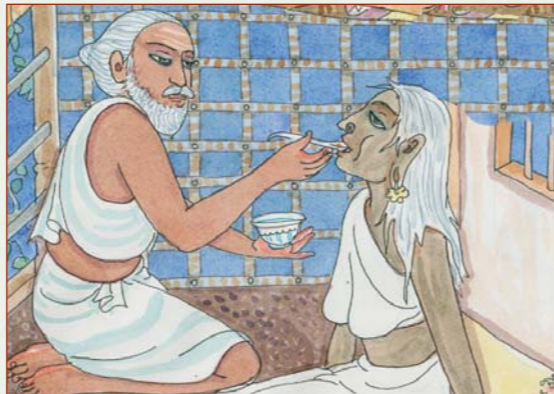
gyoti" (a light) on the train. When he saw Siva Yogaswami disembark, he cried out, "You see! There he is." The pandit canceled his discourses, located and rushed to Siva Yogaswami's ashram and prostrated at his feet. His visit to the hut became the clarion call that here indeed was a worshipful being.

From then on people of all ages and all walks of life, irrespective of creed, caste or race, went to Yogaswami. They sought solace and spiritual guidance, and none went away empty-handed. He influenced their lives profoundly. Many realized how blessed they

had been only after years had passed.

Yogaswami's infinite compassion never ceased to impress. He would regularly walk long miles to visit Chellachchi Ammaiyar, a saintly woman immersed in

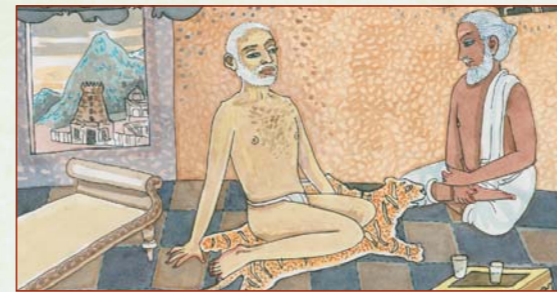
meditation and tapas. Yogaswami would feed her and attend to duties as she sat in samadhi. Upon her directive, her devotees, some the most learned elite of Sri Lanka, transferred their devotion to Satguru Yogaswami



after her passing.

He would mysteriously enter the homes of devotees just when they needed him, when ill or at the time of their death. He would stand over them, apply holy ash and safeguard their passage. He was also known to have remarkable healing powers and a comprehensive knowledge of medicinal uses of herbs. Countless stories tell how he healed from afar. He would prepare remedies for ill devotees. Cures always came as he prescribed.

When not out visiting devotees, Yogaswami would receive them in his hut. From dawn to dusk



they came and listened, rapt in devotion. In 1940 Yogaswami went to India on pilgrimage to Varanasi and Chidambaram. His famous letter from Varanasi states, "After wandering far in an earnest quest, I came to Kashi and saw the Lord of the Universe—within myself. The herb that you seek is under your feet."

One day he visited Sri Ramana Maharshi at his ashram at Arunachala Hill. The two simply sat all afternoon, facing each other in eloquent silence. Not a word was spoken. Back in Jaffna he explained, "We said all that had to be said."

Followers became more numerous, so he gave them all work to do, seva

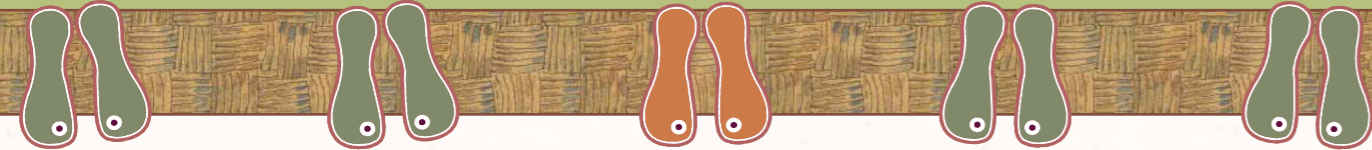
to God and to the community. In December of 1934 he had them begin his monthly journal, *Siva-thondan*, meaning both "servant of Siva" and "service to Siva."

As the years progressed, Swami more and more enjoyed traversing the Jaffna peninsula by car, and it became a common sight to see him chaperoned through the villages. On February 21, 1961, Swami went outside to give his cow, Valli, his banana leaf after eating, as he always did. Valli was a gentle cow, but this day she threw her head powerfully, struck his leg and knocked him down. The hip was broken, not

a trivial matter for an 88-year-old in those days. Swami spent months in the hospital, and once released was confined to a wheelchair.

Devotees were heart-stricken by the accident, yet their guru remained



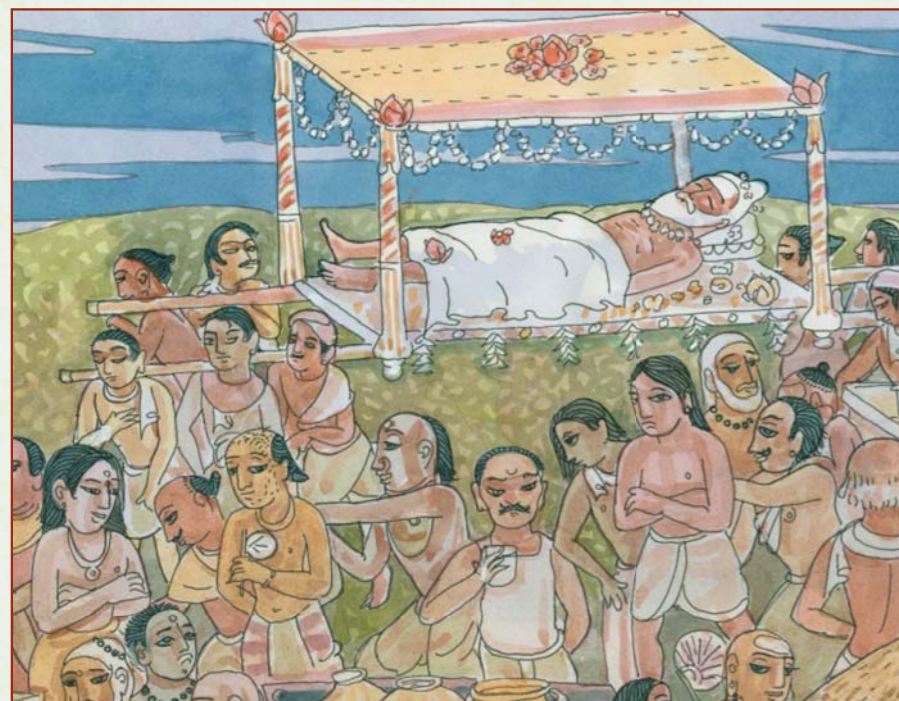
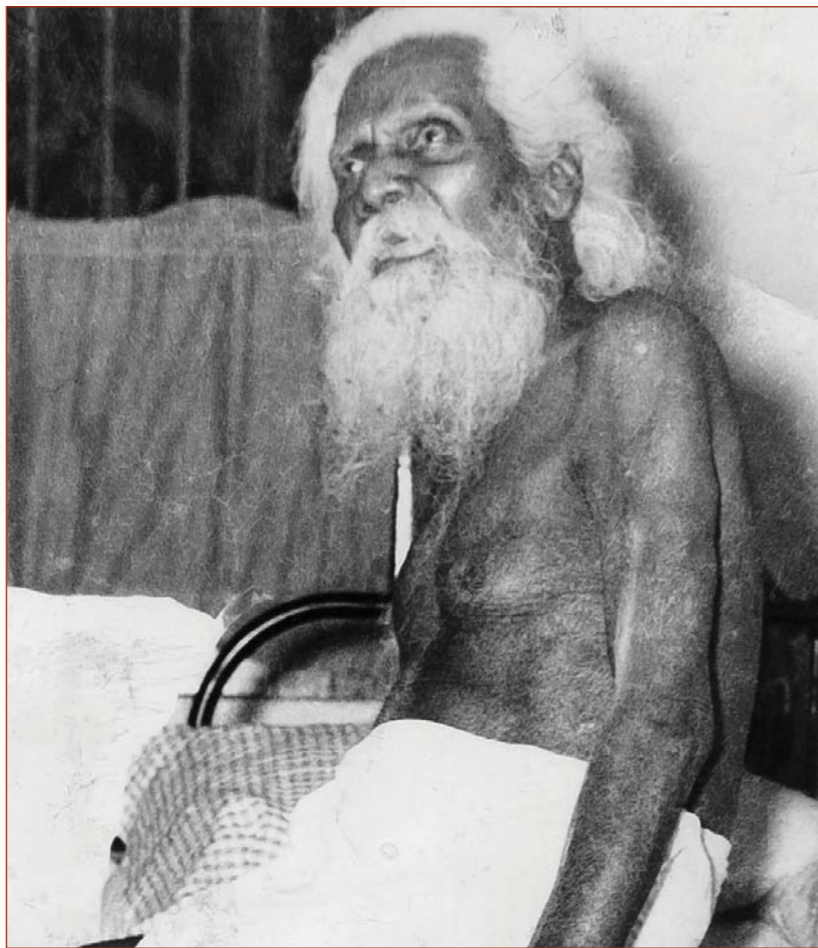


them down, and he occasionally scribed them himself [see p. 72]. His Natchintanai have been published in several books and through the primary outlet and archive of his teachings, the *Sivathondan*, a monthly journal he established in 1934.

These publications preserve the rich legacy of Swami's sayings and sweet songs. The Natchintanai are enchantingly composed and a joy to sing. Swami's devotees soulfully intone them during their daily worship and discipline, as much today as when the great sage walked the narrow lanes of Jaffna. Natchintanai are a profound and powerful tool for teaching and preserving Hinduism's core truths.

Based in pure Saiva Siddhanta, the Natchintanai affirm the oneness of man and God. Though Yogaswami dauntlessly stressed the nondual nature of Reality, he could never be labeled an Advaitic or Vedantin. He acknowledged the utmost peaks of consciousness but also the foothills that must be traversed to reach that summit, and constantly spoke of the Nayanars, the 63 Tamil saints who embodied his Siddhanta heritage and ideals. His message was summarized by him in two words, Sivadhyana and Sivathondu—meditation on Siva and service to Siva. With these two, he ever asserted, one can complete the journey.

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Twilight years: This rare photo of Yogaswami was taken inside his hut after a return from the hospital. Days earlier, the 88-year-old had broken his hip when his cow, Valli, threw her head and tossed him to the ground. Devotees, not shown, have come to touch his feet.



unshaken. He ever affirmed, "Siva's will prevails within and without—abide in His will."

Swami was now confined to his ashram, and devotees came in even greater numbers, for he could no longer escape on long walks. He was, he quipped, "captured." With infinite patience and love, he meted out his wisdom, guidance and grace in his final years.

At 3:18 am on a Monday in March of 1964, Yogaswami passed quietly from this Earth at age 91. The nation stopped when the radio spread news of his Great Departure, and devotees thronged from every corner of the island to bid him farewell. Tens of thousands carried and accompanied his bier to the cremation grounds the following day. Though enlightened souls are often interred, it was his wish to be cremated. Stories of his life are told and retold. His hut in Columbuturai, from which he ruled Lanka for 50 years, is a sacred site in Jaffna, and a small temple complex was erected there. This year, 2014, was celebrated as the 50th anniversary of his Mahasamadhi. Yogaswami's teachings and the Nandinatha lineage live on through the work of Kauai's Hindu Monastery in Hawaii, USA.

The Power of Parampara

Glimpses of the Life and Teachings of Yogaswami

YOGASWAMI WAS A MYSTERIOUS MEDLEY: A SOLITARY MYSTIC who drew crowds to his feet, a loving guru who often spoke harshly, a man with little education who wrote literately of the highest philosophy, a yogi who loved to drive through the villages, a simple man who confounded everyone who met him. His life is recounted in the 2009 Himalayan Academy book *The Guru Chronicles*, an 816-page spiritual biography of the Nandinatha Sampradaya's Kailasa Parampara, of which Yogaswami was the 20th century's most highly regarded satguru. The book includes the stories of his life, his training with Chellappaswami, his philosophical insights and his relationship with tens of thousands of devotees and seekers. S. Rajam of Tamil Nadu, India, was commissioned to bring these true stories to life in art. The renowned artist worked for two years, bringing forth a masterly depiction of the Jaffna culture and the personalities that surrounded Yogaswami, all shared in these pages. The art above shows Yogaswami on the far right, with the primary satgurus in his lineage to his right: Chellappaswami, Kadaitswami, Rishi from the Himalayas, Tirumular and Nandinatha. His successor, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, is below, arms outstretched.

Without a satguru, all philosophy, knowledge and mantras are fruitless. Him alone the Gods praise who is the satguru, keeping active what is handed down to him by tradition. Therefore, one should seek with all effort to obtain a preceptor of the unbroken tradition, born of Supreme Siva.

Kularnava Tantra 10.1

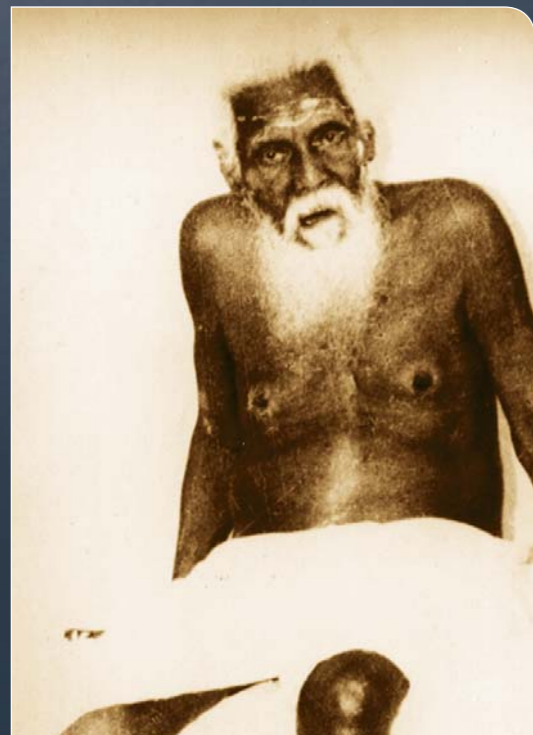


I see God everywhere. I worship everywhere. All are God! I can say that because I don't know. He who does not know, knows all. If you don't know, you are pure. Not knowing is purity. Not knowing is knowing. Then you are humble. If you know, then you are not pure. People will say they know and tell you this and that. They don't know. Nobody knows. You don't want to know. I don't know. Why do you want to know? Just be as you are. You don't want to know. Let God act through you. Give up this "I want to know." Let God speak. This idea of knowing must be surrendered. Think, think, think. Then you will come to "I do not know." I don't know. You don't know. Nobody knows. It is so. Who knows? If I can say, "I know nothing," then I am God.

Yogaswami



Meeting the Master: Tens of thousands found their way to Yogaswami's humble hut, there to sing in the presence of a rare being and be graced by his illumined words. (below left): Yogaswami after his accident, age 88.



The Day I Met Yogaswami

By Sam Wickramasinghe, Colombo, Sri Lanka

SOMETIME IN THE MID 1950S, SAM WICKRAMASINGHE, A SINHALESE Buddhist, visited Yogaswami with a Tamil friend from Jaffna. Sam was a sincere seeker who had heard much about Yogaswami but had never visited him. Sam had met his new friend one day while walking along the seashore in Colombo. Soon after they exchanged greetings, the elder began telling him about Yogaswami with great enthusiasm, then scolded him for never having visited Swami: "It is disgraceful that you haven't bothered to visit our sage who lives on this island." The man offered to pay Sam's train fare to Jaffna and invited him to live in his home in Tellipallai as long as he wished. Using the pen name Susunaga Weeraperuma, Sam recounted his experience in a small book he wrote in 1970, called *Homage to Yogaswami*.

It was a cool and peaceful morning, except for the rattling noises owing to the gentle breeze that swayed the tall and graceful palmyra trees. We walked silently through the narrow and dusty roads. The city was still asleep. We approached Swami's tiny thatched-roof hut that had been constructed for him in the garden of a home outside Jaffna. Yogaswami appeared exactly as I had imagined him to be. At 83 he looked very old and frail. He was of medium height, and his long grey hair fell over his shoulders. When we first saw him, he was sweeping the garden with a long broom. He slowly walked towards us and opened the gates.

"I am doing a coolie's job," he said. "Why have you come to see a coolie?" He chuckled with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes. I noticed that he spoke good

English with an impeccable accent. As there is usually an esoteric meaning to all his statements, I interpreted his words to mean this: "I am a spiritual cleanser of human beings. Why do you want to be cleansed?"

He gently beckoned us into his hut. Yogaswami sat cross-legged on a slightly elevated neem-wood platform, which also served as his austere bed, and we sat on the floor facing him. We had not yet spoken a single word. That morning we hardly spoke; he did all the talking. Swami closed his eyes and remained motionless for nearly half an hour. He seemed to live in another dimension of his being during that time. One wondered whether the serenity of his facial expression was attributable to the joy of his inner meditation. Was he sleeping or resting? Was he trying to probe into our minds? My friend indicated with a nervous smile that we were really lucky to have been received by him. Yogaswami suddenly opened his eyes. Those luminous eyes brightened the darkness of the entire hut. His eyes were as mellow as they were luminous—the mellowness of compassion.

I was beginning to feel hungry and tired, and thereupon Yogaswami asked, "What will you have for breakfast?" At that moment I would have accepted anything that was offered, but I thought of idli [steamed rice cakes] and bananas, which were popular food items in Jaffna. In a flash there appeared a stranger in the hut who respectfully bowed and offered us these items of food from a tray. A little later my friend wished for coffee, and before he could express his request the same man reappeared on the scene and served us coffee.

After breakfast Yogaswami asked us not to throw away the banana skins, as they were for the cow. He called loudly to her and she clumsily walked right into the hut. He fed her the banana skins. She licked

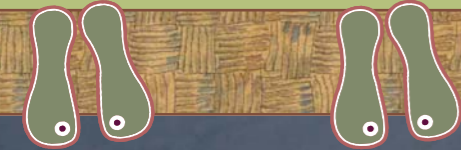
his hand gratefully and tried to sit on the floor. Holding out to her the last banana skin, Swami ordered, "Now leave us alone. Don't disturb us, Valli. I'm having some visitors." The cow nodded her head in obeisance and faithfully carried out his instructions.

Yogaswami closed his eyes again, seeming once more to be lost in a world of his own. I was indeed curious to know what exactly he did on these occasions. I wondered whether he was meditating. There came an apropos moment to broach the subject, but before I could ask any questions he suddenly started speaking.

"Look at those trees. The trees are meditating. Meditation is silence. If you realize that you really know nothing, then you would be truly meditating. Such truthfulness is the right soil for silence. Silence is meditation." He bent forward eagerly. "You must be simple. You must be utterly naked in your consciousness. When you have reduced yourself to nothing—when your self has disappeared, when you have become nothing—then you are yourself God. The man who is nothing knows God, for God is nothing. Nothing is everything. Because I am nothing, you see, because I am a beggar, I own everything. So nothing means everything. Understand?"

"Tell us about this state of nothingness," requested my friend with eager anticipation.

"It means that you genuinely desire nothing. It means that you can honestly say that you know nothing. It also means that you are not interested in doing anything about this state of nothingness." What, I speculated, did he mean by "know nothing?" The state of "pure being" in contrast to "becoming?" He responded to my thought, "You think you know, but, in fact, you are ignorant. When you see that you know nothing about yourself, then you are yourself God."



Though the state desired was thoughtless and wordless, he taught through a few favorite aphorisms in pithy expressions, to be plumbed later in silence. Three of these aphorisms I shall report here: “Just be!” or “Summa iru” when he said it in Tamil. “There is not even one thing wrong.” “It is all perfect from the beginning.” He applied these statements to the individual and to the cosmos. Order was a truth deeper than disorder. We don’t have to develop or do anything, because, essentially, in our being, we are perfectly in order here and now—when we are here and now.

DR. JAMES GEORGE



Lives transformed: (below) Dr. James George of Canada, now age 96, a lifetime scholar and diplomat and former High Commissioner to Ceylon, India and Iran; Yogaswami shown moving about in the community.

sitting still and just being. Why don’t you sit at home and confront yourself as you are, asking yourself, not me, ‘Who am I? Who am I? Who am I? Who am I? Who am I? Who am I?’” His voice rose in pitch, volume and intensity with each repetition of the question until he was screaming at me with all his force.

Then suddenly he was silent, very powerfully silent, filling the room with his unspoken teaching that went far beyond words, banishing my turning thoughts with his simple presence. In that moment I knew without any question that I AM; and that that is enough; no “who” needed. I just am. It is a lesson I keep having to relearn, re-experience, for the “doing” and the “thinking” takes me over again and again as soon as I forget.

Another time my wife and I brought our three children to see Yogaswami. Turning to the children, he asked each of them, “How old are you?” Our daughter said, “Nine,” and the boys, “Eleven” and “Thirteen.” To each in turn Yogaswami replied solemnly, “I am the same age as you.” When the children protested that he couldn’t be three different ages at once, and that he must be much older than their grandfather, Yogaswami just

laughed, and winked at us, to see if we understood.

At the time we took it as his joke with the children, but slowly we came to see that he meant something profound, which it was for us to decipher. Now I think this was his way of saying indirectly that although the body may be of very different ages on its way from birth to death, something just as real as the body, and for which the body is only a vehicle, always was and always will be. In that sense, we are in essence all “the same age.”

After I had met Yogaswami many times, I learned to prepare my questions carefully. One day, when I had done so, I approached his hut, took off my shoes, went in and sat down on a straw mat on the earth floor, while he watched me with the attention that never seemed to fail him. “Swami,” I began, “I think...” “Already wrong!” he thundered. And my mind again went into the nonconceptual state that he was such a master at invoking, clearing the way for being.

Looking at the world as it is now, thirty years after his death, I wonder if he would utter the same aphorisms with the same conviction today. I expect he would, challenging us to go still deeper to understand what he meant. Reality cannot be imperfect or wrong; only we can be both wrong and imperfect, when we are not real, when we are not now!

“Who Am I?”

By Dr. James George, Toronto, Canada

DR. JAMES GEORGE WAS PROFOUNDLY INFLUENCED BY SWAMI. The following is an account of his visits to the sage’s hut in Columbuthurai.

The Tamils of Sri Lanka called him the Sage of Jaffna. His thousands of devotees, including many Sinhalese Buddhists and Christians, called him a saint. Some of those closest to him referred to him as the Old Lion, or Bodhidharma reborn, for he could be very fierce and unpredictable, chasing away unwelcome supplicants with a stick. I just called him Swami. He was my introduction to Hinduism in its pure Vedanta form, and my teacher for the nearly four years I served as the Canadian High Commissioner in what was still called Ceylon in the early sixties when I was there.

For the previous ten years I had been apprenticed in the Gurdjieff Work, and it was through a former student of P. D. Ouspensky, James Ramsbotham (Lord Soulbury), and his brother Peter, that, one hot

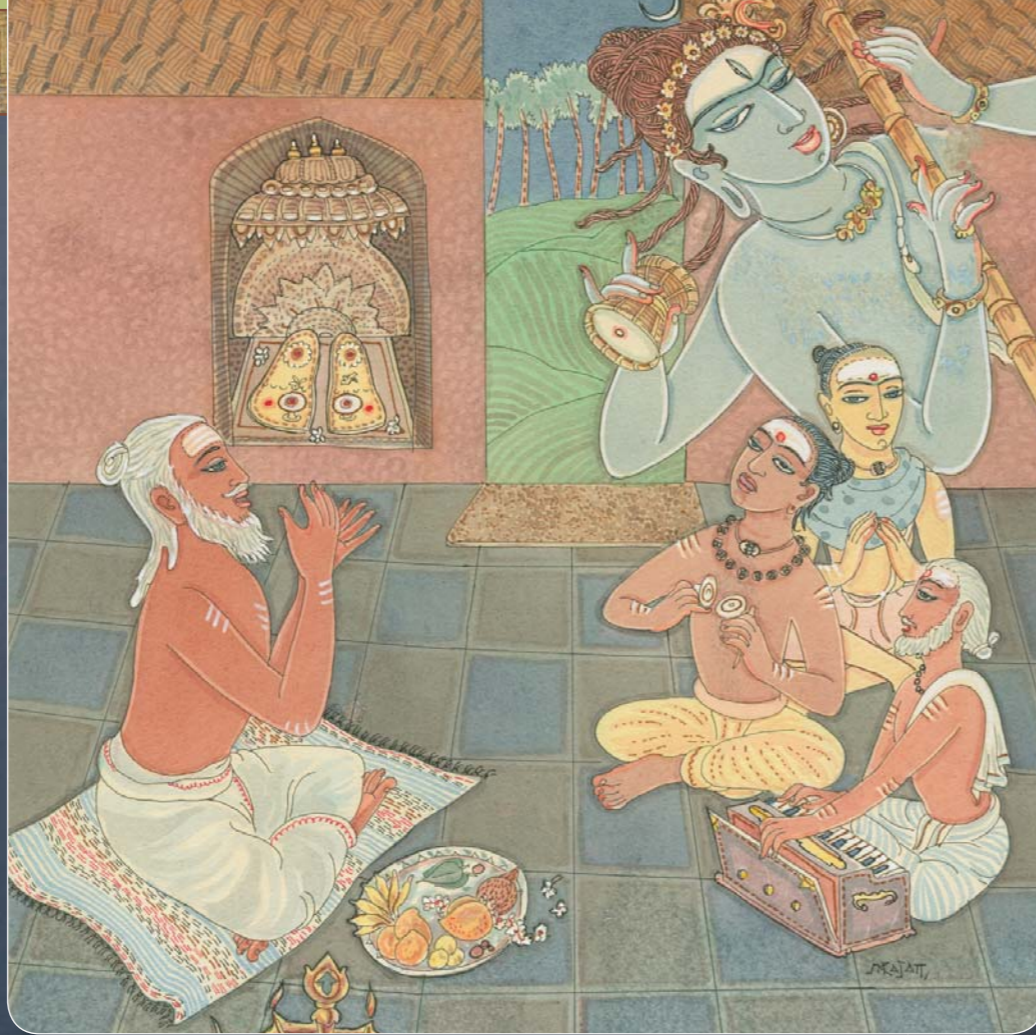
afternoon, not long after our arrival in Ceylon, I found myself outside a modest thatched hut in Jaffna, on the northern shore of Ceylon, to keep my first appointment with Yogaswami.

I knocked quietly on the door, and a voice from within roared, “Is that the Canadian High Commissioner?” I opened the door to find him seated cross-legged on the floor—an erect, commanding presence clad in a white robe, with a generous topping of white hair and long white beard. “Well, Swami,” I began, “that is just what I do, not what I am.” “Then come and sit with me,” he laughed uproariously.

I felt bonded with him from that moment. He helped me to go deeper towards the discovery of who I am, and to identify less with the role I played. Indeed, like his great Tamil contemporary, Ramana Maharshi of Arunachalam, in South India, Yogaswami used “Who am I?” as a mantra as well as an existential question. He often chided me for running around the country, attending one official function after another, and neglecting the practice of sitting in meditation. When I got back to Ceylon from home leave in Canada, after visiting, on the way around the planet, France, Canada, Japan, Indonesia and Cambodia, he sat me down firmly beside him and told me that I was spending my life-energy uselessly, looking always outward for what could only be found within.

“You are all the time running about, doing something, instead of

From 1911 to 1915 Chellappaswami did not allow Yogaswami to be with him. On one occasion Yogaswami visited Chellappaswami's hut. Suddenly the sage emerged, shouting and swearing at him to get out of there. Realizing that his guru was about to start throwing things, Yogaswami turned on his heels and retreated the way he came. "Stand on your own two feet!" the sage bellowed after him. Chellappaswami would come to the illupai tree occasionally, observe his disciple and go. Once when his guru came, Yogaswami stood up and went to worship him. Chellappaswami glared, scolding, "What! Are you seeing duality? Try to see unity." Chastened by these words, Swami remained rooted to the spot.



Bringing everyone to Siva: *Yogaswami ruled the community and was visited daily by devotees seeking his blessings. He answered their queries, sang sacred songs with them, and spoke of Siva as the All in all. Thousands of stories unfolded inside that hut as he drew them all into Sivadhyanam and Sivathondru, meditation on Siva and service to Siva.*

and feeble. Yet I go on the same. I always find love in my heart. I think that probably love is the most important thing in life." Swami was moved and pleased by the answer. "You and I are the same," he said. "That's what I find important, too."

After the man left, Swami told those who were gathered around that to have a simple heart, as this man did, is worth more than anything else. "Everything is so simple, but man with his monkey mind and his idea of 'I' and 'mine' makes a complex mess of it, then blames everyone around him because he cannot see the truth. This man will leave his body in a few days. It will be simple and natural for him. And he has something that he will carry on into his future lives: a fine and simple sense of life. Everything will be easy for him." The man died a few days later.

Know Thy Self by Thyself

Yogaswami would say, "If you are a king, will you have contentment? If you are a beggar, will you have contentment? Whatever your walk in life may be, you will only have contentment through knowing yourself by yourself." It was a persistent call to action, a prescription he wrote up frequently, urging devotees to undertake sadhana, to curb the mind, to discipline their life and live in Siva's perfect grace.

Anyone who came to Swami with an honest and simple heart was well received. When children visited, he would lift them onto his lap and tell those around him, "This child and I are the same age. We speak the same language. And we understand things the rest of you have forgotten."

Sometimes he would ask children to sing for him. They would sing the Natchintanai hymns he had composed, and he would join in, perhaps singing in a child's airy voice. As often as not, he would ask the child if he or she wanted anything, a toy, or something else. If a wish was expressed, he would send out for it immediately.

He was also stern with children. He told them that the most important thing to learn was obedience. Once he wrote a letter to a boy, advising: "Be obedient. Listen to the advice of your father, mother, elder sisters, younger brother, as well as your uncle, aunt and elder brothers. Always set an example in obedience. Siva does all." "Oh, it might seem hard," he would say, "But it is the best way of living in the world. Even I take orders. My orders come from within. Later you, too, will receive orders from within."

Most people came like children and were obedient to his orders. He was so close to his devotees that they would rush to tell him when a child was born, sometimes before they told the rest of their family. They would have a special offering ready to take to Swami so that when the child was born they wouldn't have to stop at a shop, but could go straightaway to see him and receive his blessing for the child.

Often he would greet these new fathers at his compound gate and shout at them with a twinkle in his eye, "Great news I have for you. A lovely girl named Thiripurasundari was born this morning. Come, let us celebrate." That, of course, was exactly the news the father was

bringing, except that he hadn't yet named his daughter! Many people in Jaffna received their names from Swami in such ways.

Markandu, the Surveyor

Markanduswami, a close devotee of Yogaswami from the time they met in 1931, was a lifelong bachelor who wanted to renounce the world and take sannyasa in the middle of his career. Yogaswami told him to continue in his profession as a surveyor. Finally, when Markanduswami's retirement came at age 60, Yogaswami surprised him by arranging for a kutir to be built in a small coconut grove in the village of Kaithadi, a hut with one room, an open porch and a concrete floor, with walls and roof of woven palm fronds. He settled his disciple there and looked after him for years.

His foremost sadhana, a difficult one they say, was to speak only the words of his guru, so everyone who spent an hour with him would hear, again and again, "Yogaswami said...." "Yogaswami taught us...." He was amazingly faithful to this discipline of not giving out his own wisdom, though he was deeply endowed. Standing on his porch or perched on a raised neem seat with four posts and a canopy, he would explain excitedly that Yogaswami gave him the following sadhana, his indirect way of inviting seekers to control their own minds: "Sit in one place. Do not move. Watch where your mind goes; watch the fellow. First, he'll be in Kandy, then go to Colombo, then to Jaffna, all in a fraction of a second. Keep track of every place he goes. If he goes one hundred places and you have caught only ninety-nine, you fail. As you progress in this sadhana, you will begin to pick up things coming from within. When you get messages from inside, you must deliver them to those who need to know. It will be a great help to them."

On one Mahasivaratri evening Yogaswami paid a surprise visit to Markanduswami's hut and told the old sadhu, "We shall observe this Mahasivaratri vrata with meditation only." That night, for them, there were no pujas, no chanting of Natchintanai, Agamas or Puranas, only meditation in absolute silence. T. Sivayogapathy shared:

"Markanduswami was a man of few words and avoided involving himself in the public life. He knew the whole corpus of Natchintanai songs by heart and always quoted Natchintanai when talking about Hinduism and spiritualism. Yogaswami is said to have told devotees, 'Markanduswami is my compass to you all; he shall show you all the spiritual directions,' this being an indirect reference to Markanduswami's career as a surveyor. Markanduswami attained mahasamadhi on May 29, 1984."

One Day...

Yogaswami looked after everyone, and nothing was hidden from his inner vision. He knew exactly what was going on in his village, and all over Jaffna for that matter. Very little deserving his attention ever escaped it. A devotee recalls her time with Yogaswami during this period.

"Yogaswami went about like a king. I came to know of him when I married into a family who had taken him as their guru. The first time I saw him was the day after my wedding, on the 4th of September, 1951. I had not yet met Swami, though he lived very close to our house.

"We had returned from Malaysia after the Second World War. I first saw him on a visit with my husband and my father-in-law, Sir Vaithilingam Duraiswamy, who had known Swami since 1920. We took tea in a flask and fruits on a tray. It was about 7pm when we arrived at the small mud hut with roof thatched with coconut fronds. It was dark inside the hut as I followed my father-in-law and husband. There were no lights, only the camphor burning in front of Swami. When my turn came to fall and pray at his feet, I saw myself looking at a pair of eyes so powerful, as if they saw into you.

He Touched the Soul in All

ONE MORNING AN OLD MAN CAME TO VISIT YOGASWAMI WHO WAS Swami's same age and had known him for a long time. He was living in an old folks' home run by the government and subsisting on a small pension. Entering the hermitage, he placed a bunch of bananas at Swami's feet and prostrated. Swami was clearly happy to see him. This companion had come often, and Swami enjoyed his company.

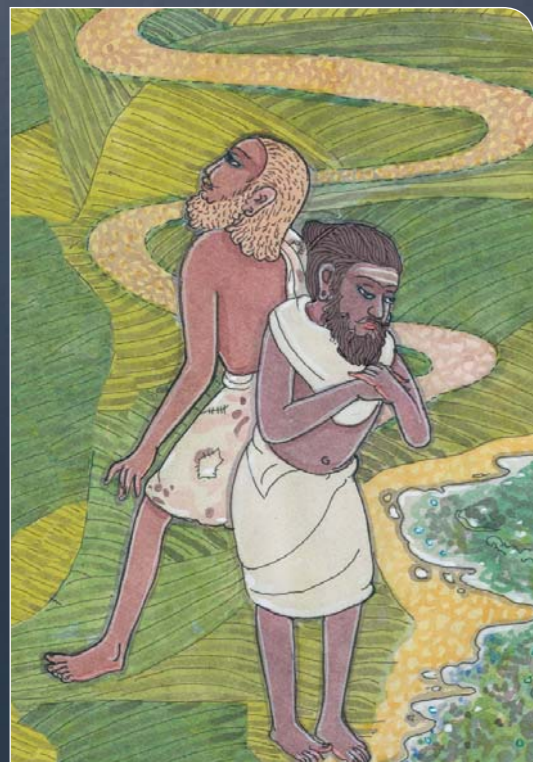
"Good morning, old friend," Swami greeted him. Then they talked for some time about the man's situation. How had he been? Had he been enjoying good food? Finally, Swami asked him by what means he had traveled. "On the train, Swami," came the answer.

"But trains are crowded these days and difficult for an old man like you to climb on and off of. It's a great deal of trouble for you to travel on the train," Swami replied. "Oh, Swami, I only think of one thing when I set out to see you, and that carries me along. No difficulties at all coming here."

"I know what you mean," Swami replied, "but traveling is really too much trouble for you, and costly, too, these days. You needn't come, you know. There are other ways of visiting me." Swami fell quiet but his friend continued, "Oh, Swami, coming to visit you every few months gives my life a wonderful peace. It is worth any amount of trouble."

Swami kept his silence, allowing that conversation to die away completely, then spoke again. "Tell me, old friend, you have lived a long time now, and have lived a good life; do you feel at peace? What stands out in your mind as the most important thing in your life?"

"You know, Swami, I have given that question a lot of thought these days. Everything that I used to think was important is gone. My family is gone. My friends are gone. My home is gone and my work is finished. My body is old





"We sat opposite him. He spoke to my father-in-law for a while, then turned his eyes on me and asked, 'Can you cook?' I replied, 'Yes.' He also gave me a Devaram book of Saint Tirujnanasambandar's songs. After that, I came to cook for Swami nearly every day. We would often visit him in his hut. He drank his tea from a coconut shell. The shell kept the heat in, and most Jaffna people had them in their house.

"He also came for lunch the three years when my husband was stationed in Jaffna. My husband would read for him. He would say, 'If Sorna reads, I can understand.' He had named my husband Sorna and wanted his brothers and sisters to call him by that name.

"The people of Jaffna treated him as their king. He walked about Jaffna, through the paddy fields and palmyra groves, visited houses and scolded people who had to be put right. In my father-in-law's house his words were law. Most decisions to be made were put forth to Swami and his conclusion was carried out.

"Swami encouraged everyone to go to the temple. Once on the morning of the annual chariot festival at Nallur Temple, my father-in-law was still asleep, and we could not leave without his permission. It was 7am, and at eight the Lord would come out of the temple. Suddenly we heard Swami shouting in front of the house, 'What are you all doing there? Get out and go to the temple! Arumugan comes once a year to bless everyone. Go!' He was Lord Nalluran Himself, ruling his people. He called everyone by name.

"My mother was a great devotee of Lord Nalluran. As we lived close to Nallur Temple, she conducted her day according to the ringing of the temple bells. Getting up at 4am, she would say, 'My Nalluran has gotten up.' Swami would often come and sit on one of the verandah chairs. He would look at her as if to say, 'Don't you know

me? I am your Nalluran.' He was a strength to the Jaffna people. He was their Nalluran."

Occasionally Yogaswami refused to accept things, sometimes asking that food offerings be buried in the yard behind his hut. "Don't even let the crows eat it," he would shout. "It's not fit for the crows to eat!" One day a man came with a tray of offerings. In the middle of the tray was a bag containing five hundred rupees, a goodly amount in those days. Those around watched him present the offering, speculating what Swami would do, for they all knew the money came from a venture Swami was not in favor of.

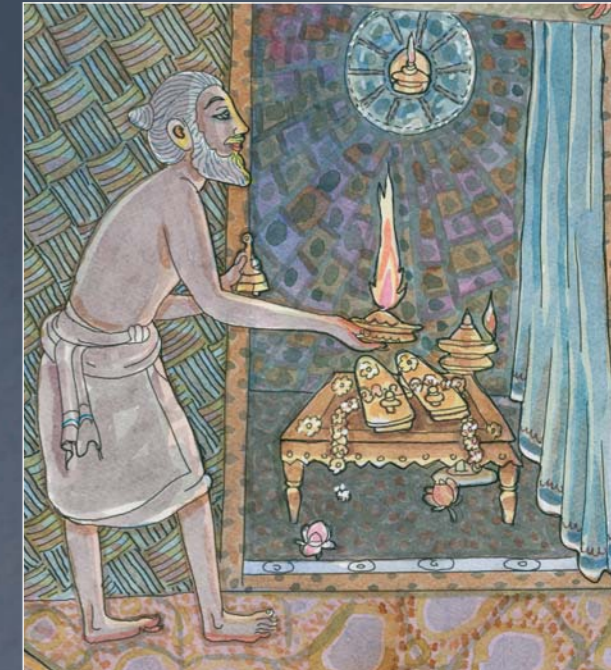
Usually in such cases Swami would not accept it. To add force to the refusal he might even send the tray and its contents sailing through the air with a strong throw. But this time, to everyone's surprise, he instructed a devotee to distribute it to various people. Swami instructed, "Save a hundred rupees and take Vithanayar to the doctor. I've heard he's ill. He won't want to accept the money, so tell him he can pay me back later. Then he will accept."

Entering the house, the devotee found Vithanayar sitting in the courtyard. Startled to see him appearing so fit, the man inquired about his health. Vithanayar said everything was fine, so the devotee gave him the money as Swami had instructed, which, true to life, was initially refused but finally accepted under the strict condition that it would be repaid.

Unsured of what to do next, the devotee decided to return to Swami when Vithanayar's daughter motioned him aside and said that her father had a high fever and was quite sick, but was simply too stubborn to let on or do anything about it. Understanding this, he told Vithanayar that Swami had ordered him to take him to the doctor. He pleaded, "If you don't go, I'll be in trouble with Swami. And

One day at about 12 noon, when the sun was unbearably hot, an old woman came into the hut, panting and perspiring. She appeared to have come a long distance, and she was carrying a large jak fruit, since it was known this was among Swami's favored foods. She unloaded the burden in front of the Swami and sat down with a sigh of happy relief. Swami watched all this and addressed the woman thus: "Look here, are you mad? Why did you walk all this distance in this hot sun carrying this huge jak?" The woman waited for two minutes and retorted: "It is I who carried it all the way for you. It was my pleasure; why do you reprimand me for that? I am not asking for anything in return from you. I wanted to bring it to you, and I have brought it. Now let me rest for awhile and get back home. You keep quiet." Thoroughly surprised at the woman's innocent admonishing, Swami told her, "You can have a fine rest and also a life of peace and joy." He had her served with a cup of coffee and told his devotees, "With one sentence she has shut my mouth. It was my fault to have blamed her." He then gave her an orange and sent her home.

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Close to the earth: Yogaswami envisioned a spiritual community of young celibate men who would grow food for pilgrims while following strict spiritual disciplines. The land was acquired during Swami's lifetime, and the center manifested in 1965, just after his passing. (far right) Swami performs daily worship to his guru's sandals in his hut.



THE GURU'S SANDALS

Yogaswami had a pair of his guru's wooden sandals enshrined behind a curtain in his single-room hermitage. To these, his most sacred possession, he offered worship each morning. His daily routine was to awaken early, bathe, pluck a few flowers and perform arati, passing burning camphor before them on a raised pedestal. These still remain today. It was his only personal worship, other than visiting certain temples. The sandals also reminded all who visited Yogaswami that, indeed, he too had a guru who had led him to the goal. He was typically dressed in a white veshti that was forever and magically spotless, despite the dusty Jaffna roads. He often threw a white cloth of hand-woven cotton over his shoulders. His feet were clad in simple brown sandals, worn from his incessant walks but well kept. A few of his personal items remain today. A stainless steel water cup and shower towel with colored stripes are kept on his altar at Kauai's Hindu Monastery, and the family of Ratna Ma Navaratnam, a close devotee, cares for his black umbrella.

you know how that is." The devotee continued to beg, "Please come with me, just to satisfy Swami."

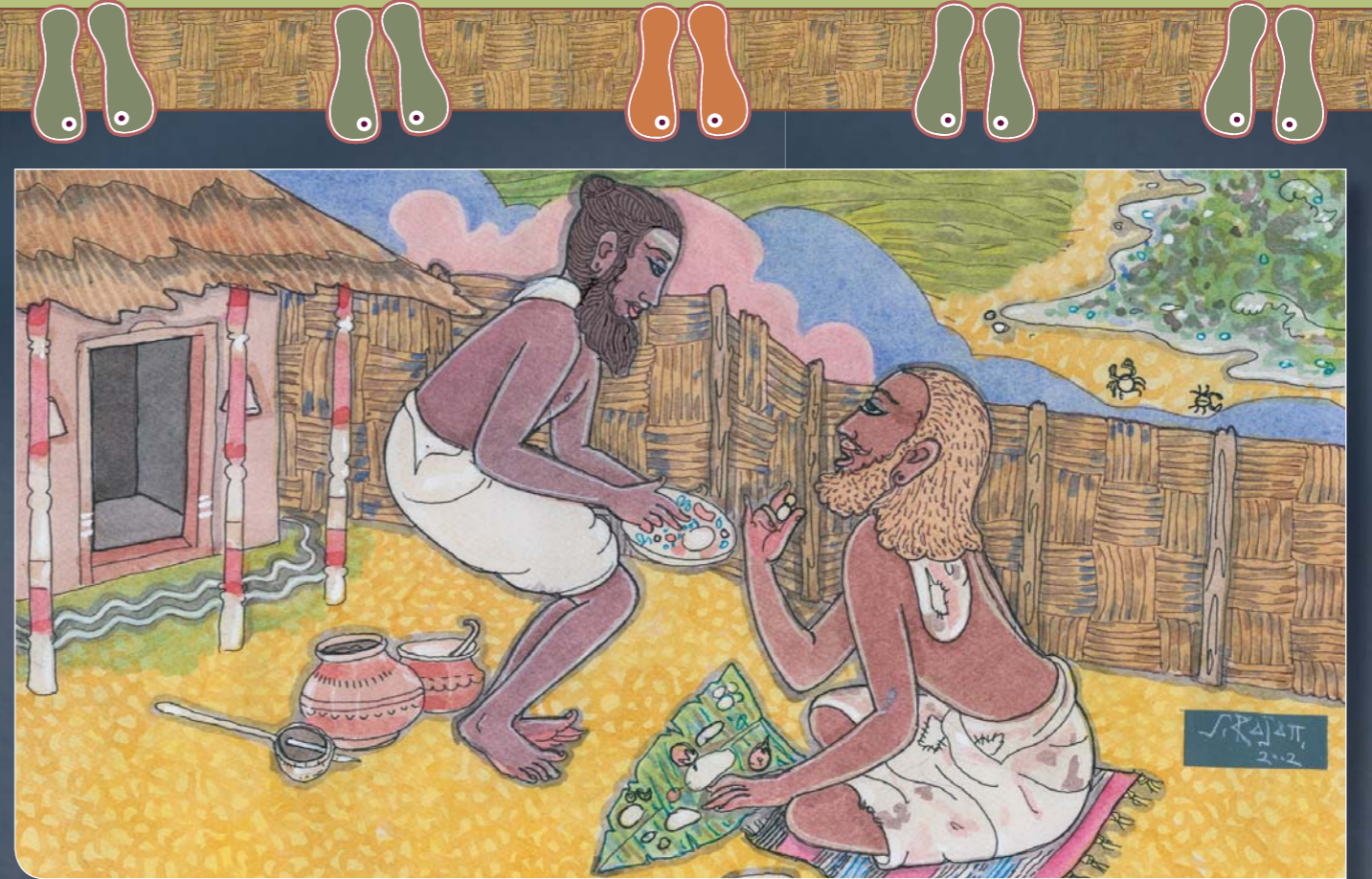
Vithanayar relented, and they set out to visit the doctor. Examining Vithanayar, the physician scolded the devotee for even moving him, much less bringing him in a car. "He has double pneumonia," the doctor scolded. But when the man explained the circumstances, he understood. After administering some medication, he gave instructions to take Vithanayar home and put him to bed, adding that he would come by the next morning to check on him. The medicine, an expensive new antibiotic, cost almost exactly the amount Swami had allotted for the visit.

A Guru's Chores

Swami arranged marriages, named babies, settled family arguments, helped devotees find homes to buy, got them jobs and generally mothered everyone. He kept all of Jaffna on its toes and made sure that people got what they needed and deserved. He gave and gave and gave and gave. He said, "We are in the tradition that gives. We give even to people who don't deserve anything, to selfish and jealous ones."

Inthumathy Amma recorded the testimony of Panchadeharam of Ariyalai, a schoolteacher who had gained much from his visits to Yogaswami through the years:

"Even though a year had passed since our marriage, my wife and I had no children. Due to financial difficulties, we were not disappointed. Even after two years, we were childless. During this time when we went for his darshan, Gurudeva asked, 'You have no children yet, isn't that so?' We replied, 'Yes, Aasan.' Then he plucked a big grape from a bunch, gave it to my wife and said, 'Do not give this to anyone. You alone must eat it.' My wife did accordingly. Next month we realized that she was pregnant."



Magical moment: Left, Chellappaswami kept camp in the chariot house at a Murugan temple. When Yogaswami passed by one day in 1905, Chellappaswami shook the bars and simultaneously shook his future disciple to the core. Above, Yogaswami serves his guru lunch on a banana leaf.

“Who Do You Think You Are?”

YOGANATHAN WAS WALKING ALONG THE ROAD OUTSIDE Nallur Temple. Sage Chellappaswami shook the bars from within the chariot shed, where he camped, and boldly challenged, “Hey! Who are you?” (Yaaradaa nee?). Yoganathan was transfixed by the simple, piercing inquiry. Their eyes met and Yoganathan froze. Chellappaswami’s glance went right to his soul. The sage’s eyes were like diamonds, fiery and sharp, and they held his with such intensity that Yoganathan felt his breathing stop, his stomach in a knot, his heart pounding in his ears. He stared back at Chellappaswami. Once he blinked, in the glaring sun, and a brilliant inner light burst behind his eyes. He later wrote of that moment:

He revealed to me Reality without end or beginning and enclosed me in the subtlety of the state of summa. All sorrow disappeared; all happiness disappeared! Light! Light! Light!

Waves of bliss swept his limbs from head to toe, riveting his attention within. He had never known such beauty or power. For what seemed ages it thundered and shook him while he stood motionless, lost to the world. He later described it as a trance.

To end my endless turning on the wheel of wretched birth, he took me beneath his rule, and I was drowned in bliss. Leaving charity and tapas, charya and kriya, by fourfold means he made me as himself.

The roaring of the nada-nadi shakti—the mystic, high-pitched

inner sound of the Eternal—in his head drowned out all else. The temple bells faded in the circling distance as from every side an ocean of light rushed in, billowing and rolling down upon his head. He couldn’t hold on, not for an instant. He let go, and Divinity absorbed him. It was him, and he was not.

By the guru’s grace, I won the bliss in which I knew no other. I attained the silence where illusion is no more. I understood the Lord, who stands devoid of action. From the eightfold yoga I was freed.

Yoganathan stood transfixed, like a statue, for several minutes. As he regained normal consciousness and opened his eyes, Chellappaswami was waiting, glaring at him fiercely. “Give up desire!” he shouted. People were passing to and fro, unaware of what was taking place. “Do not even desire to have no desire!”

Yoganathan felt the grace of the guru pour over and through him, all from those piercing eyes. Such elation he had never known. Dazed, he saw that the guru intended to dispel all darkness and delusion with his words, which were beyond comprehension in that moment: “There is no intrinsic evil. There is not one wrong thing!”

Yogaswami later wrote of this dramatic meeting in a song called “I Saw My Guru At Nallur:”

I saw my guru at Nallur, where great tapasvins dwell. Many unutterable words he uttered, but I stood unaffected. “Hey! Who are you?” he challenged me. That very day itself his grace I came to win. I entered within the splendor of his grace. There I saw darkness all-surrounding. I could not comprehend the meaning. “There is not one wrong thing,” he said. I heard him and stood bewildered, not fathoming the secret. As I stood in perplexity, he

looked at me with kindness, and the maya that was tormenting me left me and disappeared. He pointed above my head and spoke in Skanda’s forecourt. I lost all consciousness of body and stood there in amazement. While I remained in wonderment, he courteously expounded the essence of Vedanta, that my fear might disappear. “It is as it is. Who knows? Grasp well the meaning of these words,” he said, and looked me keenly in the face—that peerless one, who such great tapas has achieved! In this world all my relations vanished. My brothers and my parents disappeared. And by the grace of my guru, who has no one to compare with him, I remained with no one to compare with me.

As Yoganathan tried to comprehend the experience, his guru had already forgotten him there. Chellappaswami was scanning distant rooftops, mumbling to himself and nodding in accord with all he was saying, then began walking away. Yoganathan started to follow when the sage called back over his shoulder, “Wait here ‘till I return!”

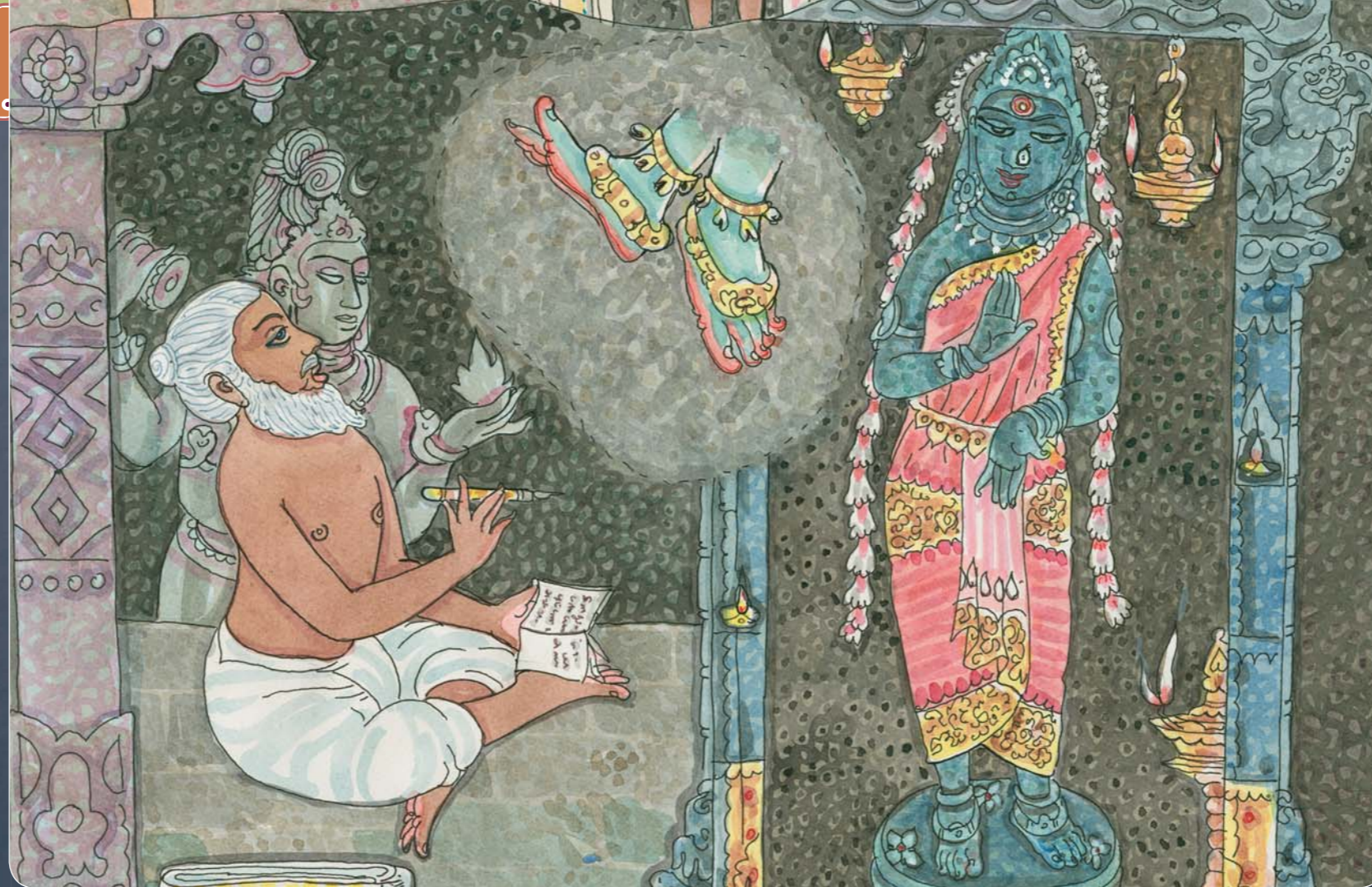
It was three full days before his guru came back, and the determined Yoganathan was still standing right where he left him. Chellappaswami didn’t speak or even stop. He motioned for Yoganathan to follow, leading him to the open fire pit where the sadhu prepared his own meals. There he served Yoganathan tea and a curried vegetable stew, then sent him away.

He didn’t welcome or praise his new disciple; he didn’t say to come back or not to come back. He didn’t have to. Yoganathan knew he had been accepted. And his training began—the first chance he got, he bent to touch Chellappaswami’s feet, and his guru bellowed in dismay. Drawing back, the sage scolded him, “Don’t even think of it!” Yoganathan was bewildered, but he obeyed, and his guru calmed down. “You and I are one,” he said. “If you see me as separate from you, you will get into trouble.”

THERE IS ONLY ONE!

Chellappaswami’s insistence on the oneness of guru and disciple, in fact the oneness of everything, while strange to the average man, was a faithful expression of the ancient *Agama* texts, which decree: “‘Siva is different from me. Actually, I am different from Siva.’ The highly refined seeker should avoid such vicious notions of difference. He who is Siva is indeed Myself. Let him always contemplate this non-dual union between Siva and himself. With one-pointed meditation of such non-dual unity, one gets himself established within his own Self, always and everywhere. He who is declared in all the authentic scriptures as unborn, the creator and controller of the universe, the One who is not associated with a body evolved from maya, the One who is free from the qualities evolved from maya and who is the Self of all, is indeed Myself. There is no doubt about this nondual union” (*Sarvajnanottara Agama* 2.13–16).

Come, offer worship, O my mind, to Gurunathan's holy feet, who said, "There is not one wrong thing," and comforted my heart. Come swiftly, swiftly, O my mind, that I may adore the Lord who on me certainty bestowed by saying "All is truth." Let us with confidence, O my mind, hasten to visit him who at Nallur upon that day "We do not know" declared. Come soon and quickly, O my mind, Chellappan to see, who ever and anon repeats, "It is as it is." Come, O my mind, to sing of him who near the chariot proclaimed, "Who knows?" with glad and joyful heart for all the world to know. Come now to Nallur, O my mind, the satguru to praise, the king of lions on tapas's path whom nobody can gauge. Come with gladness, O my mind, our father to behold, who of lust and anger is devoid, and in tattered rags is clothed. Please come and follow me, O mind, to see the beauteous one, who mantras and tantras does not know, nor honor or disgrace. Come, O my mind, to give your love to the guru, free from fear, who like a madman roamed about, desiring only alms. Come, O my mind, to join with him who grants unchanging grace and is the Lord who far above the thirty-six tattvas stands.



Sacred words: (left) Swami's songs of philosophy and ecstatic states of mind were often composed at the feet of Thayalnayaki (Goddess Parvati) at a shrine in a nearby temple where he could inwardly hear Her ankle bells ring. (lower left) Devotees would write down Yogaswami's spoken gems of wisdom. These were later compiled in a small book called Words of Our Master.

top like birds. It is not a simple thing to control the mind. It cannot be done in a day, or even in a year. Through constant effort thoughts can be controlled a little. In this way the uncontrollable mind can finally be brought under control. This is the supreme victory.

Call not any man a sinner! That One Supreme is everywhere you look. Ever cry and pray to Him to come. Be like a child and offer up your worship. Forswear all wrath and jealousy; Lust and accursed alcohol eschew. Associate with those who practice tapas, And join great souls who have realized Self by self.

Everyone must find out the path that suits him. The train can only run on rails.

As we kiss our children every day before going to work, so must we daily love the Lord.

If you remove illusion, you will see that Siva pervades everything.

If you want liberation in this birth, make your mind a cremation-ground and burn all your desires to ashes.

The world is an ashram, a training ground for the achievement of freedom. Each one does his part according to his own measure.

You must meditate in the morning and evening and at night before you go to bed. Just pronounce the name 'Siva,' and sit quietly for about two minutes. You will find everything in your life falling into place and your prayers answered.

Let happiness and sorrow come and go like the clouds.

The Teachings of Yogaswami

HE SPOKE TAMIL AND ENGLISH FLUENTLY BUT KEPT A SINGLE book in his hut, Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. It was all he needed, that and his guru's guidance. Often Yogaswami would sing spontaneously, and if fortune smiled a devotee would write it down to preserve for others to enjoy. Sometimes he would arrive at a devotee's house with a song written down that had come to him from within, gifting it to the family. Swami's compositions consist of 385 Natchintanai songs, twenty letters and about 1,500 terse sayings.

Swami's teachings explore the mysteries of yoga, disclose the divine experiences on the path and praise Chellappaswami and the Mahadevas, especially the supreme Lord, Siva—avoiding the intricate complexities of the Tamil language. He spoke forcefully, artfully, but in everyday terms. Indeed, his language was incisively simple, and even his profound Natchintanai were couched in common vocabulary, unlike the classical verses of Tirumurai and earlier saints. Natchintanai is a personal diary of sorts, recording Swami's experiences, his realizations, his anguish and his hopes. The language and style are straightforward. His poems on Murugan and Siva have such a feel of familiarity that you could reach across the page and touch them. He talks to the lizard and the peacock with the confidence that they, too, can help his quest. He uses folk songs and dances, indicating that he was communing with the common man. He goads us on to the feet of the guru on the path, reminding us often that is what a human birth is for: to serve Siva, to meditate on Siva, to find union in Siva.

So simple is the path, yet you make it hard by holding onto the idea that you are you, and I am I. We are one. We look at the sun and feel its rays. The same sun, the same rays, the same nerves doing the feeling. That also happens when we look within. We feel the darshan of the Lord of the Universe, Siva without attributes. The same darshan is felt by you and me alike. Not your Siva or my Siva; Siva is all. We must burn desire and let the ego melt in the knowing that Siva is all; all is Siva. There are millions of devas to help you. You need only implore them and keep yourself steady through sadhana. Then you will come to see all as one and will taste the divine nectar.

There is a chair at the top reserved for you. You must go and sit in that chair. From there you will see everything as one. You will know no second. That is a state unknown even by the saints and celestials. Buddha attained that state and came down to help others. Christ knew that state and also tried to bring others to it. Many others no one has heard of have known that state. That chair is there, reserved for you. It is your job to occupy it. If you don't do it in this lifetime, you might do it in the next or in the next or in the next. It is the only work you have to do. There are those who can fly to the

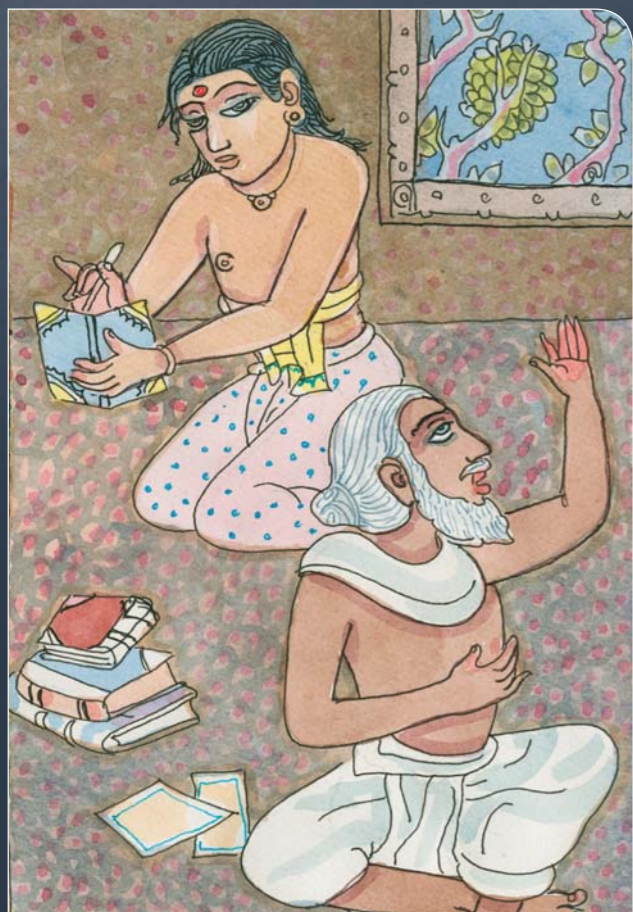
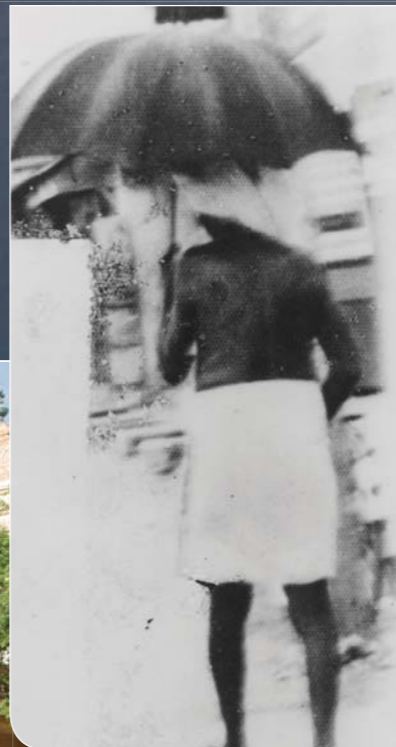
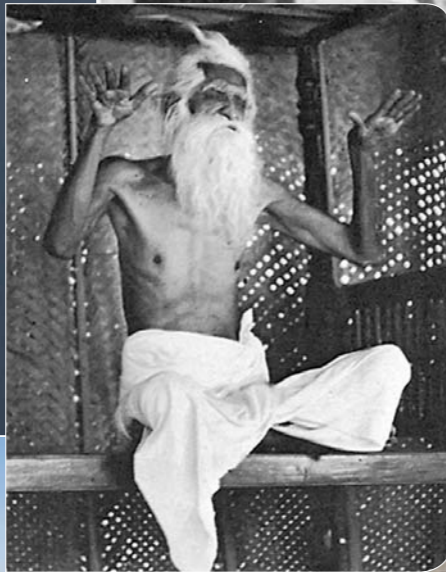
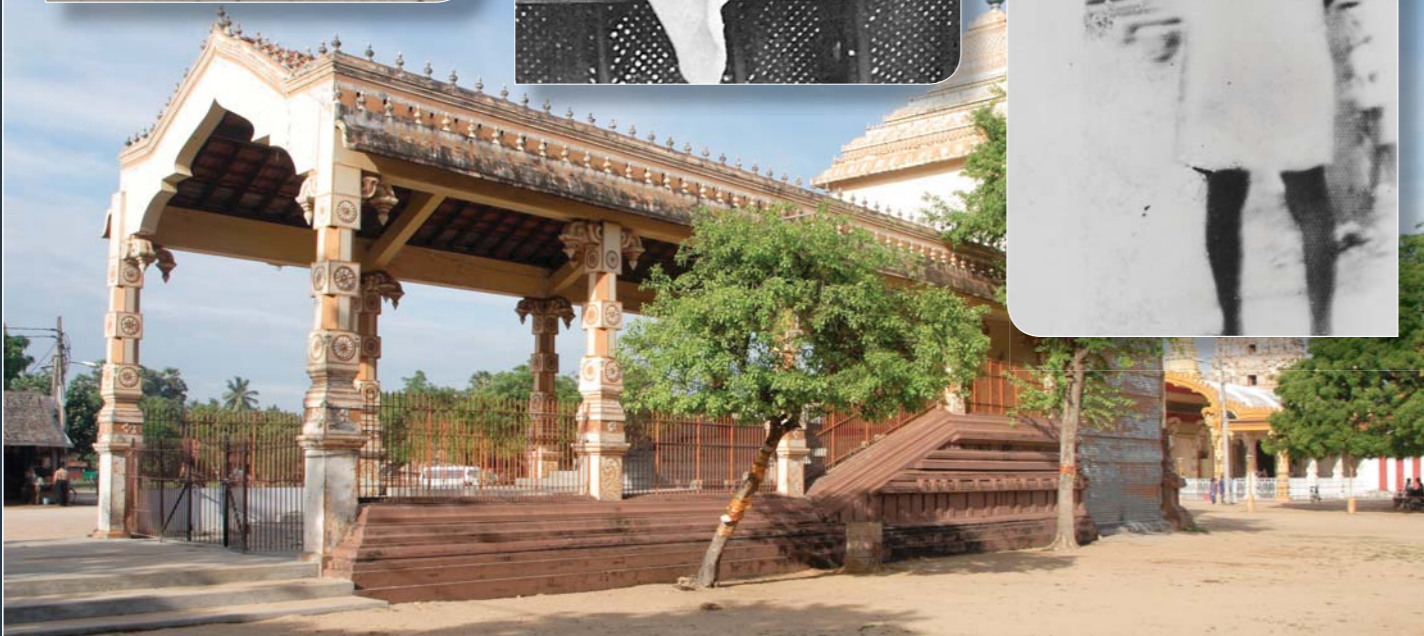
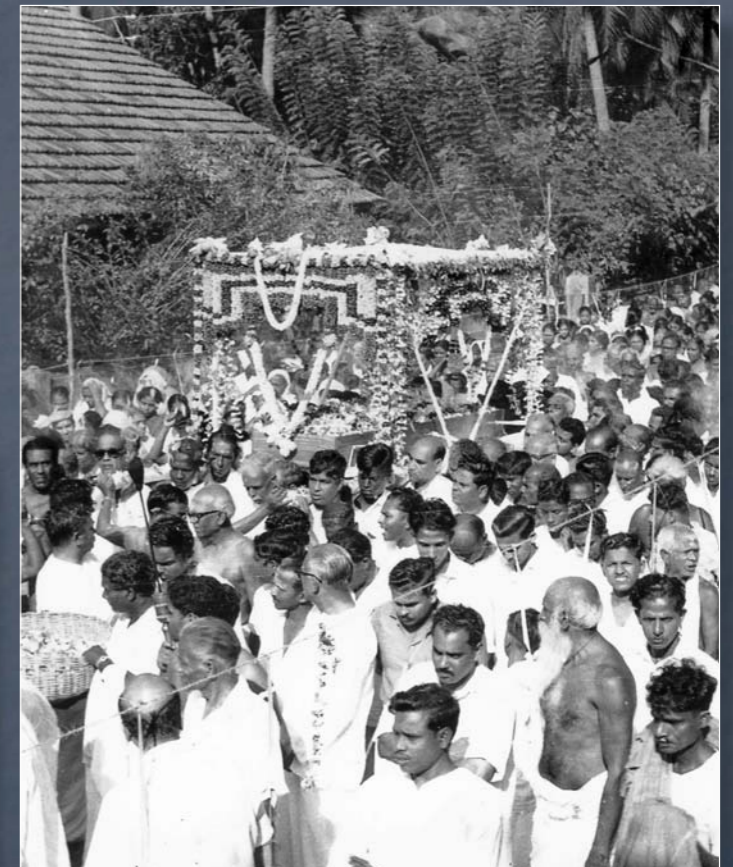


Photo Gallery

(clockwise from right) Devotees gather in Yogaswami's hut after his hip surgery. Swami was secretly photographed walking the Jaffna lanes, his umbrella fending off the tropical sun. The chariot house in which the tall chariot is stored and where Chellappaswami often camped (with Nallur Temple behind). Inset: A woman worships at the bilva tree under which Chellappaswami sat. Markanduswami, who was so loved by Yogaswami that the guru built this hut where the lifelong brahmachari lived out his hermit's life.



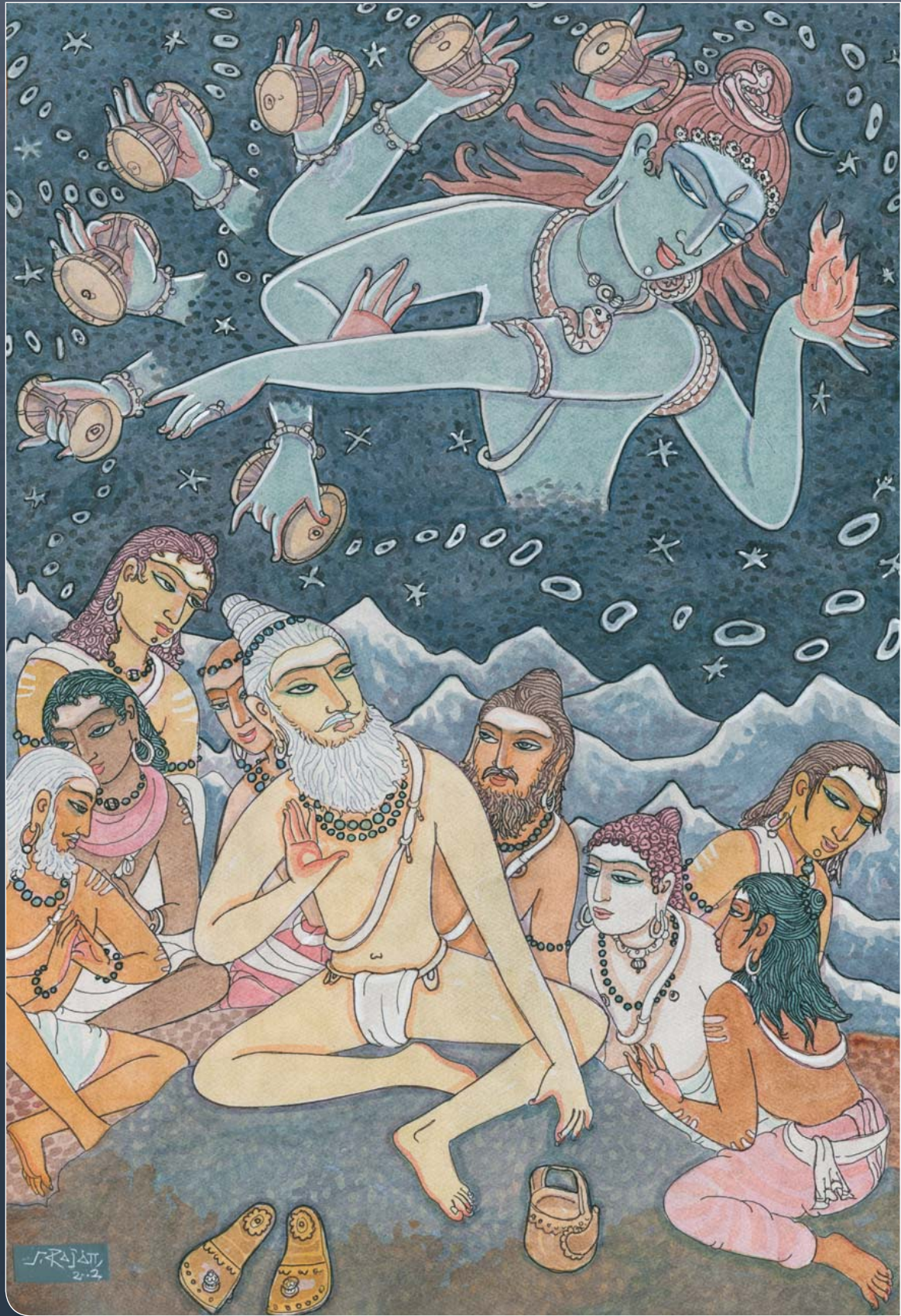
(counterclockwise from above) Yogaswami's hut in Columbuthurai. Inside the austere dwelling. The shrine holding Swami's guru's holy sandals which he worshiped daily. Yogaswami's body is prepared for cremation. Devotees carry their guru's bier to the cremation grounds in 1964.



Lord Siva beats His drum fourteen times, issuing forth fourteen primal sounds to create the universe. High in the Himalayas, siddha Nandinatha sits with his eight yogic disciples to teach, for the first time in known human history, the revelatory truths of the monistic tradition of Saiva Siddhanta. His disciples are Sivayoga Muni, Patanjali, Vyaghrapada, Tirumular and the four sages, Sanaka, Sanantana, Sanatana and Sanatkumar. These are the forerunners of the Nandinatha Sampradaya, to which Yogaswami's Kailasa Parampara belongs.

A short video about the parampara and additional images and links to the stories and to The Guru Chronicles, the book from which this story is excerpted, can be found here:

<http://bit.ly/yogaswamiparampara>



OPINION

Exploring the Dynamics of Our Hindu Identity

I grew up publicly ashamed of my religious background. That's all changed.

BY MURALI BALAJI

THROUGHOUT MY ACADEMIC AND JOURNALISTIC career I worked to reconcile my Hindu identity with my professional life. Like many in my generation, I craved acceptance and perceived a false choice between assimilation and insularity. I've witnessed both extremes: I've seen second-generation Hindus who stay safely within the confines of their own community, and I've seen others who completely give up their cultural and religious identities, even anglicizing their names so that the Sanskrit or Tamil doesn't sound so foreign. How many of you know someone named Krishnan who changed his name to Kris or something like that? It happens. It's been happening for decades in this country.

I grew up in America, and one of the most important things for me was how my family passed down ritual to me. Like many of my fellow second-generation Hindu Americans, I was bequeathed the rituals without necessarily understanding the meanings behind them. More importantly, my parents were never given a manual on how to teach me to balance my Hindu values and practices with the daily reality of being American. Among those realities was the fact that, for a time, I was the only Hindu in my grade school.

Our parents' generation believed they could raise Indian Hindus in America without necessarily acculturating their children to the real-world environment. For example, when I was in grade school, the textbooks taught me that the caste system was oppressive and that Hinduism is a patriarchal and somewhat strange religion.

In the eighties several popular movies came out that lampooned Hinduism. Some of you might remember *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. There's an infamous dinner scene where they serve chilled monkey brains from a severed skull. For weeks after seeing that, I was bullied incessantly by my classmates. More importantly, I had a teacher who—rather than trying to understand what my faith identity was—callously asked, "Well, is that true, do Indians eat monkey brains?"

For this and other reasons, and like many in my generation, I grew up publicly ashamed of my religious identity. I had no tools to help me explain my religious heritage, so I could not take part as an equal in any interfaith dialogue. I went through a period—especially as a teenager—where I openly rejected my Hinduness. At home I would still practice; but in public you couldn't get me near a temple.

I went to the University of Minnesota where, for the first time in my life, I was alone, 1,200 miles from my family—and almost every day, someone would try to convert me. Do you know the first thing I did to make myself feel more at home? I put together a small altar in my dorm room with murtis of Lord Balaji, Hanuman and Murugan.



That little corner became my solace.

What made me truly appreciate my Hindu identity had nothing to do with interactions with other Hindus. It was a conversion attempt. I was in the gym working out when a "Campus Crusade" guy approached, offering to help me work out. I said, "Sure. I could use some help putting this weight up." While assisting me, he suggested we could play football together. I had played football in high school, so I consented, "Great. Let's play football later!" Then he proceeded to invite me to his non-denominational church of worship. I declined, "Nah, I'm good. I'm not Christian." I said that unguardedly, just as I was lifting 180 pounds, which was a lot for me. The guy abruptly turned and left me, a 17-year-old, holding all that weight. It proceeded to drop on my chest. Summoning the strength of Lord Balaji, I was somehow able to get that weight off. It was a profound (I could even say heavy) lesson. I had been

confronted with a threat to my Hindu identity, and I had responded by embracing it.

Fast forward, years later. Here I am, a second-generation Hindu American who has seen too many of my peers abandon their Hindu identity. They did not necessarily convert to other religions, but they don't identify as Hindu. The beauty of Hinduism is that it's not dogmatic; but on the flip side, that lack of dogma forces us living in the diaspora to figure out how to define Hinduism for ourselves.

Think about this: when you see someone who is of the Jewish faith, someone who is of the Christian faith, someone who is of the Muslim faith, take on a leadership role, generally these leaders acknowledge their faith even within the context of our secular society. How many of us do that? So many Hindus are leaders in our various spheres of influence, yet we're hesitant to share our Hindu-ness. We think, "Oh, there's no reason to bring up my Hindu identity." My question is: Why not? Isn't it our faith that has guided us all along? Isn't it dharma that has made us do right, that has fortified us so we can lead, that has inspired us to help those in need?

Some of the strongest Hindu populations in the world are found in Malaysia, Guyana, Trinidad, South Africa and Mauritius. In those places Hindus remain strong in their religious and cultural identity because they face the daily threat of conversion. Instead of walking away from their religion, they gather together, affirm their spiritual heritage and give each other strength.

MURALI BALAJI, PhD, 34, a native of Philadelphia, journalist and author, is Director of Education and Curriculum Reform at the Hindu American Foundation. This column is excerpted from his October 20, 2013, talk at the Sri Balaji Temple, Aurora, Illinois.



DONALD E. HURLBERT, SMITHSONIAN

Pictorial feast: The Smithsonian's "Beyond Bollywood" exhibit is rich with photographs depicting Indians in American history

EXHIBITS

Indian Immigrants, American Odyssey

At the Smithsonian, Indian Americans and their influence on American culture are portrayed in the first-ever exhibition dedicated to the community

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW YORK

WHAT DOES THE SUITCASE OF AN imaginary, nameless Indian immigrant to the US contain? Perhaps old wedding photos with groom in turban and bride in wedding sari; Hindi film music LPs; a *chakla-belan* for rolling chapatis and a sculpture of Ganesha.

"We included a statue of Ganesh in the display simulating a trunk that immigrants in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s would have brought," says Dr. Masum Momaya, curator of a new exhibition at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC. "Ganesha was brought by not only Hindu immigrants

but those of other faiths as well—as a cultural symbol of the Remover of Obstacles." Momaya is herself the daughter of Indian immigrants.

As at a temple, gurudwara or mosque, the entrance to the exhibition is lined with rows of shoes, slippers and sandals. Some visitors automatically start to remove their own footwear, until they realize this is part of the exhibit, showing the Eastern attitude of respect before entering a sacred place or personal home.

Over 10 million visitors, many of them non-Indian, are expected to enjoy this truly Indian space created in the Smithsonian

Museum. "Beyond Bollywood: Indian Americans Shape the Nation" is the first exhibition to spotlight the Indian-American community which, despite its small numbers, has impacted the US in many ways.

The first Indian migrants are recorded as landing in America in the 1700s. These early arrivals were known simply as "Hindoos"—no matter what their faith. Those brave souls left the comfort of their own culture and homeland to cross the seas to an unknown and bewildering new world. Until 1900 they were considered foreigners, "non-whites." From 1940 to 1970, their race was "Other" on all forms. They came to be categorized as

Years of photo collections: (right) Smithsonian curators worked for several years reaching out to Indian Americans to share their photo collections with the museum; (below) items one might have found in the suitcase of an early Indian immigrant

Asian Indians in 1980.

For the first time, their untold stories have been gathered together in this major exhibition. "Beyond Bollywood" presents rare photographs, public programs and artifacts donated to the Smithsonian's permanent collection, documenting their history and achievements. The exhibition will run for a year at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, after which it will travel through the US for five years, through 2020.

"The Indian-American story has yet to be fully told," says Dr. Konrad Ng, the Director. "This exhibition is about celebrating a community that embodies the American spirit."

Over a million dollars were raised for this project, largely from the Indian community. Some of the key "Saffron Donors" (\$100,000 apiece) were Rick and Sadhana Down, HR Shah, Kanu and Dakshu Shah, and TV Asia. Several other prominent Indian-Americans, organizations and hi-tech companies have donated at various levels. Donors were invited to a special opening-night ribbon cutting with Smithsonian bigwigs, Dr. Konrad Ng (brother-in-law of President Obama), Congressman Ami Bera, actor Madhur Jaffrey and artistes, athletes and writers participating in the exhibition. Later they joined over 450 guests at a glamorous opening reception in the spectacular rotunda of the National Museum, appropriately presided over by a sculpture of a life-size elephant.

Scope of the Exhibit

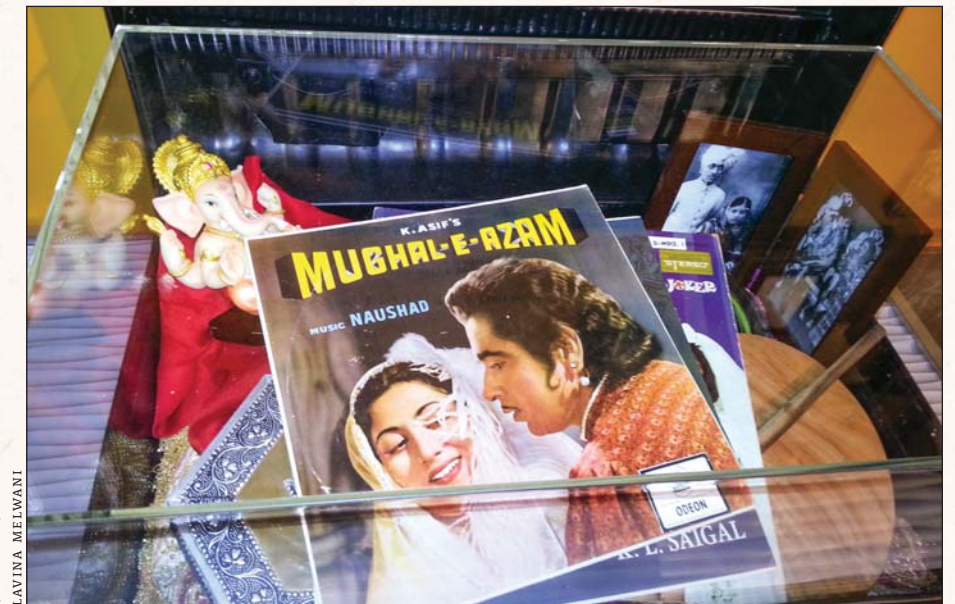
"Beyond Bollywood" strives to depict the Indian-American journey through migration, success stories, food, music, cinema and art. The exhibit's name does not match the gravitas of the migration—*Bollywood* is a recent, Mumbai-centered term—yet its content is rich, touching upon the history of the early immigrants from all over India.

"I think this is especially timely and important. Immigration is a core part of American history—America is a nation of immigrants—yet there are still strong sentiments that we are 'foreigners' and 'outsiders,'" says Momaya. "Our history here shows how false this is. It dates back to 1790, just 14 years after the nation was founded. Our hands have helped build the railroads and cultivate farms. We have established trade and small businesses five generations ago that still exist today."

The exhibit includes rare images of Indian immigrants working on railroad construction back in 1906 and Indian migrants farm-



DONALD E. HURLBERT, SMITHSONIAN



LAVINA MELWANI

ing in California. Even today, 95 percent of farmers in Yuba City are Sikhs.

Visitors learn some fun, offbeat facts: The first Indian restaurant to open in America may have been Taj Mahal Hindu Restaurant in 1921, right on 42nd Street in New York, serving Persian and "Hindu" food. The first Indian cookbook published in America was *Unique Hindu Recipes*, in 1940. In 1969 Vijay Bhatt created Shalimar Restaurant in New York, offering Indian food to New Yorkers of all ethnicities. Bhatt even persuaded Weight Watchers to introduce Indian dishes in its offerings.

The many artifacts of Indian life include the historic election posters of Dalip Singh Saund, the first Indian-American congress-

man; Vinod Dham's original 80386 microchip, developed in 1985 by Intel (a precursor to the Pentium chip); and the physician's bag carried by Dr. Abraham Verghese as a small-town physician in rural America during the AIDS crisis. The Indian spelling-bee champs get their place in the sun too, with a space set up for children to take the mike and attempt a difficult word.

A display devoted to contemporary Indian-American artists includes photos by Annu Matthew titled "An Indian from India," pairing her self-portraits with early photographs of Native Americans. Matthew explores similarities between the photographic treatment of Native Americans and the colonial gaze of British photographers working in India.



First Hindu temple in the Western world: The Vedanta Society's "old" temple on Webster Street in San Francisco was built by Swami Trigunatita in 1905

Influence on Mainstream America

Migration is all about reinvention and re-creation. Indians, now 35 million of the American population, have had a far-reaching impact: more than 1 out of every 10 Indian Americans is a doctor, dentist, nurse or physical therapist; 30 percent of taxi drivers in New York are of Indian origin; and 50 percent of US motels are owned by Indian Americans.

The majority of immigrants from India have been Hindu, and their influence has infiltrated every aspect of life. The many temples across America, the many Indian grocery stores and the current emphasis on vegetarianism have surely been due to Hindu immigrants. Since the majority of Indians here are Hindu, I asked Momaya whether there should have been more about the grand temples built in the US.



Some exhibits miss the mark: The beautifully done exhibit on Indian food fell short with text descriptions of dishes on plates, as if this could capture culinary art

"It was important for us to highlight the amazing architectural contributions that Indian Americans of all faiths, including Hindus, have made to the US, such as the building of grand temples, but we could not go into detail in this, given space limitations," responded Momaya. "As you know, the full story of Indian Americans is vast and requires more than a 5,000-square-foot exhibition."

Momaya said the research focused on how religious traditions were brought and practiced by Indian immigrants, contributing to the religious pluralism that has characterized the United States from its founding. So the exhibition explores philosophies that were shared and took root, traditions of prayer and worship that are now part of the American religious landscape and daily life and US Indian religious architecture such as temples, mosques, churches

and synagogues.

In keeping with India's affirmed spirit of pluralism, a video highlights all religions equally. Wall text explains to visitors: "In 1893, three religious teachers—Virchand Gandhi (Jainism), Anagarika Dharmapala (Buddhism), and Swami Vivekananda (Hinduism)—continued America's founding principles of religious freedom and plurality, sharing their philosophies at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

"Today, Indian Americans identify as Buddhists, Christians, Jains, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Zoroastrians, as well as atheists and agnostics. A typical American day now could include a Muslim employee performing *namaaz*, one of five daily prayers, during her lunch hour, or a Jain man working an early shift in order to observe *chauvihar*, the practice of fasting after sunset.

"America also looks different because of this plurality. It is no longer uncommon for an American city's architectural landscape to include a *dehrasar* (Jain), *gurudwara* (Sikh), *masjid* (Islamic) and *mandir* (Hindu). In these houses of worship, Indian Americans congregate, contemplate, pray, and pass on their beliefs and traditions to the youth."

The exhibition highlights the Indians who have owned hotels and motels. Many of these are Gujaratis, who carried their Hindu faith and vegetarianism into the motels. The display of a motel lobby peeks into the life of an Indian motel owner: Outside the manager's desk it is all Western and mainstream, while the inside is desi, with a shrine to Hin-

du Gods. A series of photographs from The Arch Motel Project by Chiraag Bhakta and Mark Hewko features Indian motel owners living and working in their motels.

Bhakta writes: "This series was inspired by my parents' first entrepreneurial step in America—my first home, The Arch Motel in New Jersey. The motel quickly became a hub for my extended family coming from farming villages of Gujarat. During a long stay at The Arch, they acclimated to America and learned the basics for running their own motels." In 2006, Bhakta teamed up with photographer Mark Hewko to photograph motels run by Indian Americans across the country. The photos are part of an ongoing series, each capturing the dualities of two cultures in distinctive small-town settings.

Much space is devoted to yoga, India's most popular contribution to America, featuring its history and the many different schools of yoga in America. The wall text explains, "Spiritual teacher Swami Vivekananda introduced this ancient philosophy to America in 1893. Years later, in the tumultuous 1960s, yoga intrigued Americans intent on embracing Eastern spirituality and rejecting Western materialism. In the 70s and 80s, Americans increasingly took up yoga as part of a national enthusiasm for exercise and a desire to 'feel the burn!'"

Several photos show the rise of yoga in America, including one of Swami Vivekananda and guests at Green Acre School, Eliot, Maine, ca. 1894. This school, a meeting-place for the study of world religions, was just one stop on a tour in which Vivekananda introduced the West to Hinduism and yoga. Another image shows yoga master Swami Satchidananda at the Woodstock Music and Art Fair, Bethel, New York, 1969. Satchidananda later founded Yogaville, a yoga retreat in Buckingham, Virginia. A photo of kids doing yoga at the White House Easter Egg Roll in 2009 shows how yoga has permeated American life.

What is Missing?

While the exhibit covers a lot of ground, it has received mixed reviews from visitors and critics. Documenting a vibrant community spanning several hundred years is a difficult exercise. Perhaps another 5,000 sq feet were needed so the exhibit could be more show, less tell. Larger images—maybe a mock-up of a Little India market or large-scale murals of festive celebrations—would help convey the sheer vibrancy and energy of Indian culture in America.

A large dining table is laid out with steel thalis, spice boxes and Correlle plates, familiar to all immigrants. Yet the table feels empty. Wall photos of mouth-watering Indian dishes might have been more effective, and this space could have been used for models of In-



Indian youth's intellectual prowess: This display features national spelling bee winners

dian temples, mosques and gurudwaras.

Depicting the religions, food and ceremony of Indian culture would be a challenge even in a much greater space. "Any of these topics can be the subject of multiple museums, and it was difficult to depict so many topics within one gallery of 5,000 square feet," says Momaya. "That said, we focused on highlighting how Indian religion and food have shaped the American religious and culinary landscapes, rather than trying to assemble an exhaustive treatment of either topic."

Many of the pioneering names in art, politics and business are not represented here. The "groundbreakers" section of notable achievers does not mention Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita and Kiran Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Zakir Husain, Nora Jones or Deepak Chopra, political powerhouses like governors Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley, or academics like Nitin Nohria, dean of Harvard Business School.

Upcoming young Indian-American artists and musicians are well represented, but Dr. Mahinder Tak, a prominent Indian-American community leader and art collector in Washington, regretted the exclusion of important artists like Zarina Hashmi, Natvar Bhavsar and Anil Revri.

"Our goal with 'Beyond Bollywood' is to share research, seed stories and conversations about how Indian immigrants and Indian Americans have shaped American history in numerous and nuanced ways," says Momaya. "Since a lot of the visitors at the Smithsonian are children, I want children to walk away with a sense of the roots of this community. I'm hoping their parents will feel this also. For those of us who are chil-

dren of immigrants, I'd like us to feel a sense of belonging—that we don't have to leave our roots behind in order to belong."

The photographs are the exhibition's strength. At several spots in the exhibition visitors are asked to share their photographs, which are then posted on the website and social media channels. When the exhibition travels, local communities will have an opportunity to augment the exhibition with stories, artifacts, photographs and art that are meaningful to them.

Thus, the exhibition is still evolving, with visitors bringing in their own thoughts and aspirations. It's the first show about Indian Americans, and the Indian-American story is a continuing one.

Momaya grew up in Iowa, the only brown child in her class. "The best compliment I've received was from my dad on the first day it opened. My parents had spent the afternoon touring the gallery. I was in my office answering emails when my dad called to say I had honored their experience and those of so many that came before them and with them to the United States. He couldn't finish his sentence before tearing up, and that brought tears to my eyes, too."

Indian Americans can take pride in this ground-breaking exhibit at the nation's museum, which acknowledges our contributions to American culture and finally gives us a place at the table.

See: smithsonianapa.org/beyondbollywood

LAVINA MELWANI is a New York-based journalist who writes about the arts on www.las-siwithlavina.com. Follow her on Google+.

Pythagoras the Mystic

Meet the Greek rishi who taught reincarnation, vegetarianism and more

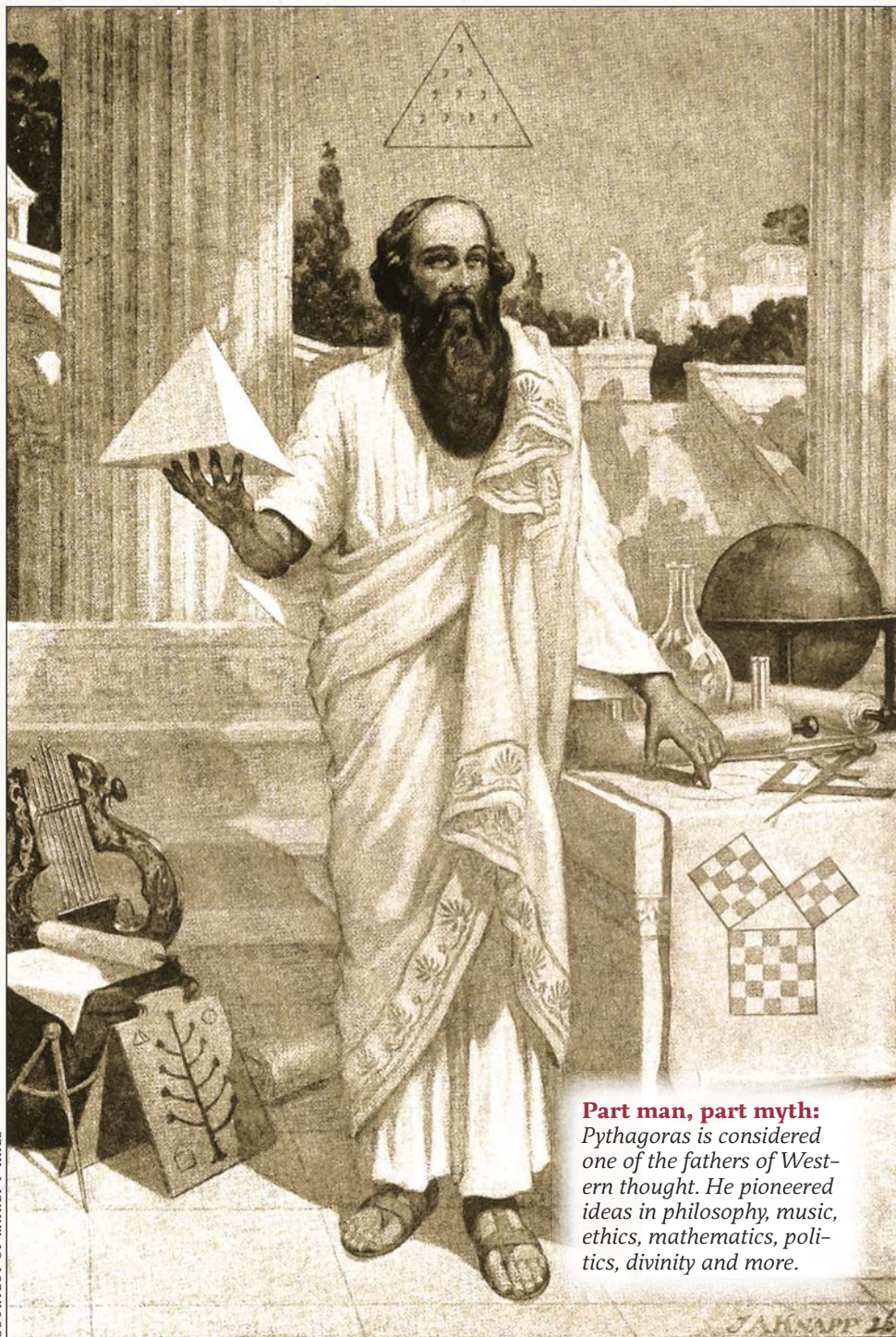
Pythagoras is generally accepted to be one of the most significant fountainheads of Western thought. Of particular interest to Hindus is the fact that his teachings were in tune with the thinking of the far East—especially India. In this article, Peter Westbrook, a writer and lecturer on music and cosmology, amplifies these connections. He and John Strohmeier co-authored "Divine Harmony," a book that recounts the fascinating story of the life and teachings of this legendary man.

BY JOHN STROHMEIER AND
PETER WESTBROOK

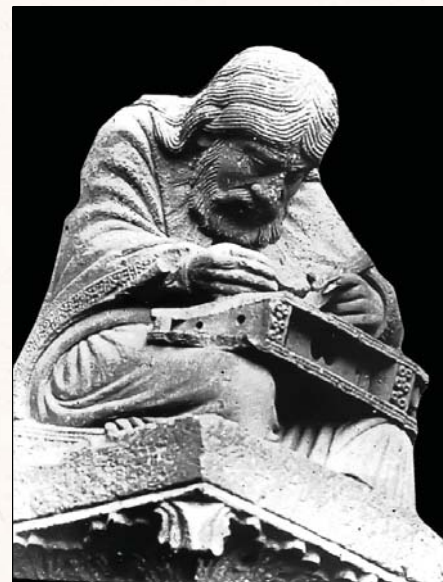
MANY CENTURIES AGO THERE LIVED a great teacher who was part of an ancient guru parampara (line of gurus). For nearly forty years he traveled extensively and studied at the feet of many masters. Eventually, he founded a community centered on an ashram where he advocated a contemplative, vegetarian lifestyle, taught the doctrine of reincarnation and trained his followers in sacred knowledge aimed at uniting the human soul with the Divine. His biographers attribute miraculous abilities to him, including the ability to mentally perceive the deepest structures of cosmic life. Was this some Vedic rishi or Hindu sage? No—this was Pythagoras of Samos, a Greek who was one of the founders of the Western tradition.

A Renaissance Man

Today Pythagoras is best remembered for the mathematical theorem he is said to have created—the one about the square of the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle equaling the sum of the squares of the other two sides. But Pythagoras was responsible for much more than that. He played a pivotal role in transmitting the wisdom of ancient traditions to the modern world. At the same time, he stands at the fountainhead of Western culture. According to historian Daniel Boorstin, the ideas he set in motion were among the most potent in modern history. Mathematics, science, philosophy, music—none of these would have taken the shape they did in the Western world without Pythagoras' discoveries. No understanding of history is possible without an appreciation of the thoughts and influence of this first scientist and philoso-



Part man, part myth: Pythagoras is considered one of the fathers of Western thought. He pioneered ideas in philosophy, music, ethics, mathematics, politics, divinity and more.



Wisdom incarnate: (top) Figure of Pythagoras from the West Facade of Chartres Cathedral in France; (right) on a medallion engraved in 395 ce; (bottom) the book, *Divine Harmony*;

pher—especially when we consider the perceived gap between Hinduism and Western thought. Yet of all the founders of the Western tradition, Pythagoras is by far the least known.

Personal Life

As with many figures from antiquity, facts about Pythagoras' life are sketchy. Like his contemporary, the Buddha, he is said to be one of those divine men of whom history knows least because their lives were at once transfigured into legend. Nevertheless, a number of early writers have left us biographical information from which we have reconstructed his story in our book *Divine Harmony: The Life and Teachings of Pythagoras*.

Pythagoras was born on the Greek island of Samos around 569 bce. Miraculous events surrounded his life from the very beginning. Legend holds that he was the son of Apollo, the Hellenic God of music and learning, and his birth was foretold by the oracle at Delphi. His early years were spent studying at all the centers of scientific and sacred learning in Greece and the eastern Mediterranean. Eventually, he made his way to Egypt, where for over twenty years he absorbed the Egyptians' knowledge of mathematics, music and medicine and their mystical teachings regarding the soul and the stages of its evolution.

Pythagoras' time in Egypt ended when the country was overrun by the armies of the Persian empire and he was taken into captivity in Babylon. This proved to be a blessing in disguise. Recognizing his prodigious learning

and receptivity to new ideas, the Persian magi took Pythagoras into their confidence and he became a student of their equally ancient mystery school. He was also subject to other influences during this time, and probably undertook further travels. Some writers believe he actually went as far as India; others accept that he studied and absorbed in some form the Vedic philosophy of ancient India, which was known in Persia at this time. And there was probably direct contact

between India and Greece before the time of Alexander. Vitsaxis G. Vassilis argues in his book *Plato and the Upanishads* that exponents of literature, science, philosophy and religion traveled regularly between the two countries. He points to accounts by Eusebius and Aristoxenes of the visits of Indian sages to Athens and their meetings with Greek philosophers. The visit of Indians to Athens is also referenced in the fragment of Aristotle preserved in the writings of Diogenes Laertius, who was also one of Pythagoras' biographers.

His Way

We can judge the most important influences on Pythagoras' thought by what he himself taught. His teaching began in earnest at the age of 56, when he returned from his travels and settled in Greece. Initially, he returned to Samos and established a school there, but he faced great pressure to enter politics. Preferring to pursue scientific research, philosophical discussion and solitary contemplation, he relocated to the city of Kroton, a Greek settlement in southern Italy. Here he established a philosophical community which was to become known as the Pythagorean brotherhood.

The essence of the doctrine underlying this community was conveyed, we are told, in the first lecture Pythagoras gave to those who gathered there, attracted by the fame that now preceded him. He taught them that the soul is immortal and that after death it migrates into other animate bodies. He said that all living things are kin and should be considered as belonging to one great family. He introduced new explanations of Gods and spirits, of the heavenly spheres, of all the natures contained in heaven and earth, and of all the natures in between the visible and invisible.

The Kosmos

From this comprehensive vision emerge all the details of Pythagorean philosophy. From the vision itself comes a central idea—Kosmos, a word coined by Pythagoras.

Its original meaning was more than merely "everything that exists." The Greek root of the word also gives us the word cosmetic. It implies beauty, adornment, an aesthetic component that springs from an inherent order that Pythagoras described by the term Harmonia, the divine principle that brings order to chaos and discord. This order also expresses itself as *philia*, love or friendship. For Pythagoras, *philia* was a cosmic force that attracts all the elements of nature into

harmonious relationships. It helps preserve the order of planets as they move across the sky, and encourages men and women, once their souls have been purified, to help one another. To the Pythagoreans, the greatest love (*philia*) was that of wisdom (*sophia*). Thus Pythagoras was the first Western philosopher (*philia* + *sophia*).

Just as in the Indian tradition, Pythagoras taught that different songs and modes were appropriate to different hours and seasons. In the spring, for example, he would arrange a ritual in which a group of disciples would sit in a circle with a lyre player seated in the middle. As the instrumentalist produced a melody, the others would begin to sing together in a spontaneous fashion, from which would emerge a song in unison, creating a powerful sense of joy. This ritual was also modified for use as a medicine to treat diseases of the body. Many stories have been handed down that illustrate Pythagoras' influence through music.

The Community

For the members of his brotherhood, the greatest goal of wisdom was attaining to the Divine. For this, Pythagoras recommended a highly disciplined lifestyle in a loving community. Entry into Pythagoras' community, essentially an ashram, required a lengthy and rigorous examination, including five years of silence. Once admitted to the inner circle, the students were exposed to abstract realms of study designed to turn attention to inner, universal values

of consciousness for soul purification. Though modern science traces its origins to Pythagoras, it eventually came to discard his mystical teachings. Perhaps science needs to re-embrace the inclusive vision of this Western rishi.

For extracts from *Divine Harmony: The Life and Teachings of Pythagoras*, see: pythagoras-divineharmony.com



INTEGRATED LEARNING

The New Face of Hindu Education

Kurukshetra Gurukul integrates tradition, academics, yoga, horsemanship, organic gardening, green energy, social service and self-sufficiency for students

BY TIRTHO BANERJEE

SWAMI SHRADDHANAND (1856–1926) was one of India's great Hindu renaissance leaders. Originally known as Mahatma Munshiram, he was a lawyer, a prolific journalist, a tireless Arya Samaj missionary of Hindu causes, an independence fighter and a force for the Hindu Shuddhi movement, the reconversion of Hindus back to Hinduism.

Social reform through Hindu education was at the top of his agenda. In 1902 he established a gurukul near Haridwar which evolved to become today's Gurukul Kangri University. In 1912 he established another gurukul on 35 acres on the west edge of the ancient city of Kurukshetra. Munishram's wife died at the early age of thirty-five, and in 1917 he took sannyas to become Swami Shraddhanand. Late in life he put all his energy into the reconversion of Hindus from Islam, which eventually led to his assassination.

The Kurukshetra Gurukul he founded is an all-boys school; girls study at the Kanya Gurukul nine miles outside Kurukshetra (see kanyagurukul.com). A century back, about 100 students attended Kurukshetra Gurukul. Acharya Dr. Dev Vrat, the present principal,

says, "We had 275 students in 1981, when I joined it. By next year we expect to cross the 1,500 mark." The school is remarkable, perhaps even unique, in that it is totally self-supported. Unlike most of India's religious institutions, it does not take government funds even to pay teachers.

Students live in three hostels—Swami Shraddhanand Hostel, Guru Virjanand Hostel and Swami Dyanand Hostel. This revival of the old guru-shishya tradition, which has been teetering on the brink of oblivion, gives hope for a more enlightened future.

Former gurukul student Rahul Arya, now pursuing his masters in sociology at the nearby university, reflects, "I see the gurukul as a temple of learning. Before entering the gurukul, I studied in a village without proper facilities. In the gurukul I found an environment conducive to my particular interests. Because of its impression on my character, I now respect my elders and am a more enlightened person. I learned social compatibility. Wherever I go, I try to leave a positive impression on the minds of the people. I am thankful to my alma mater. I am especially grateful to my principal, Dr. Dev Vrat, who helped me communicate properly."

The usual day starts at 4 am. Students

practice pranayama (breathing exercises) and hatha yoga. The daily yagna (Vedic fire ceremony) starts at 6 am followed by a discourse. Sanskrit shlokas reverberate throughout the campus, as students chant in seamless unison with total ease. Next comes breakfast and then the children head for their classes at 8:00 am, touching the feet of their gurus before each lesson starts.

The gurukul serves as a platform where students discover themselves. The gurus look into the personalities of individual students and hone each child's unique talents and skills, so that nothing is forced on him. From Sanskrit and ashtanga yoga, to math, science, English and music, this education offers a unique, unconventional mix of traditional cultural subjects side by side with science, computer labs and sports, amalgamating a religious Hindu cultural ethos with the other needs of contemporary children.

Gaurav Arya, another graduate, now pursuing his PhD in psychology, testifies, "The gurukul has been a guiding force in my life. I was shy and timid. But after joining in 1992, I became confident and self-dependent. It has proved a boon for me. Whatever I am today is the result of the grooming I received in the gurukul."



Fruit of one hundred years: (clockwise from opposite page) statue of founder Swami Shraddhanand; student assembly including girls from Kanya Gurukul—the boys in yellow vestments live separately and are studying to be pandits; yoga students' tower demonstration; equestrian training builds character and agility; a beautiful campus; (inset) school principal, Acharya Dr. Dev Vrat



ropany hospital that provides services to the needy outside the school from every stratum of society.

Lessons go beyond the classroom walls. Dilawara Singh, a member of the gurukul's management committee, explains how students learn social service: "Every Sunday the students go out to the nearby villages. There they act like crusaders, urging the villagers to rethink unwise practices. They appeal to them to break away from alcoholism and stop female foeticide." The rural folk are also invited to the gurukul and given training to deal with their problems. This training has been an eye-opener for a number of villagers. The gurukul residents are proud to have brought about a paradigm shift in the villagers' lives.

Abhishek Arya, a grade 12 student, confides, "This is a loving and caring institute. The teachers and wardens treat us like our parents. At home I was not doing well, but now my life has drastically changed. I get up early in the morning at 4:00, perform

yogic exercises followed by havan, which is a cleansing activity. Principal Acharya Dev Vrat ji's motivation and guidance has been invaluable to me."

Prashish Arya, also in grade 12, tells us, "I am 1,600 km from home. Gurukul is like a tree under which I have taken shelter for almost five years now. Studying here is like a pilgrimage for me. The teachers have shaped my character and personality. They have stood by me whenever I have faced a problem."

With a philosophy of simple living and high thinking, the gurukul inculcates sacred thoughts. "Only an education well steeped in culture is capable of developing the noble qualities of religion, good conduct, self-control, love of nation, discipline and social compatibility," avers Acharya Dr. Dev Vrat. He believes that a disciplined and controlled life not only ensures knowledge of the self but also helps in an integrated development of individual and society.

See: gurukulkurukshetra.com



Arriving at Anubhava Mantapa: Mahadevi visits Allama Prabhu at his courtyard for devotees

HINDU SAINTS

Akka Mahadevi's Complete Surrender

The poems of Karnataka's Virasaiva saints embody the deepest devotion to Siva and point us to the highest reaches of spiritual attainment

BY MANJUSHREE HEGDE, BENGALURU

LIE AWAKE IN THE THINLY LIT HOURS of the morning absorbed in the poetry of the 12th-century Virasaivas of Karnataka. The *vachanas* (poems) of Akka Mahadevi, a young saint of the 12th-century reformist Virasaiva movement, are particularly compelling. I am arrested by her words, her raw, passionate, slow arrows of beauty, her timeless appeal.

Born in the 1100s in the small hamlet of Uduthadi, Karnataka, Mahadevi was initiated into the worship of the Sivalinga at the age of ten and considered herself betrothed to Lord Siva. She spent her adolescence in His worship and composed *vachanas* that spilled over with fervent longings for her Beloved, whom she called, "Chenna Mallikarjuna" or "Lord, White as Jasmine," the name of Siva in her home town temple.

*I am in love with the one
Who knows no death, no evil, no form.
I am in love with the one
Who knows no place, no space,
no beginning, no end.
I am in love with the one
Who knows no fears nor the snares
of this world,
the Boundless One who knows no bounds.
More and more I am in love*

*with my husband
known by the name of
Chennamallikarjuna.
Take these husbands who die and decay,
and feed them to your kitchen fires!*

Vachanas hold a unique place in the long history of Kannada literature. Simple in diction, these are the rich, spontaneous outpourings of the medieval socio-religious Virasaiva reformers of Karnataka. They opened the doors for the common man to participate in the personal experience and worship of Lord Siva through the vernacular language of the day, at a time when Sanskrit was reserved only for the upper castes.

Vachanas combine the lucidity of prose with the rhythm of poetry, marked by certain internal rhymes and syntactic parallelisms. More than 20,000 *vachanas* have been composed by over 300 prominent Virasaivas. Some 300 of these are credited to Akka Mahadevi, and hers are considered among the most poetic. Her brief but deeply intense verses sparkle with the magic and music of words, conveying the core spiritual philosophy in a poignant tone of one intoxicated with divine love:

*I look at the road for His coming.
If He isn't coming, I pine and waste away.*

*If He is late, I grow lean.
O mother, if He is away for a night,
I'm like the lovebird with
nothing in her embrace.*

A Damsel Spurns Royal Marriage

Through Mahadevi's *vachanas* we can trace the contours of her life on her journey towards moksha, ultimate liberation. We gather that she was a stunning young beauty. King Kaushika, the ruler of the land, fell passionately in love with her the moment he saw her. But she spurned his request for marriage, "But for my Chennamallikarjuna, all men are mere dolls!" she chided the king:

*Fie on this body!
Why do you damn yourself
in love for it—
this pot of excrement,
this vessel of urine,
this frame of bones,
this stench of purulence!
Think of the Lord, Chennamallikarjuna!*

A persistent Kaushika threatened her family with grave consequences until she relented and agreed to marry him on the condition that he would not force himself on her without her consent. When he later failed to keep his promise, Mahadevi walked out on

him. As she departed the palace, a wrathful Kaushika demanded the return of all the jewels and extravagant clothes he had presented his wife. Defiant, Mahadevi stripped herself bare and stepped out onto the streets as a *digambara*—a naked saint.

*The last thread of clothing
can be stripped away,
But who can peel off Emptiness,
that nakedness covering all?
Fools—while I dress in the Jasmine Lord's
morning light, I cannot be shamed;
what would you have me hide under, silk
and the glitter of jewels?*

Joining the Assembly of Devotees

She walked on foot to Anubhava Mantapa or "Abode of Experience," a center for philosophical/spiritual discussions in Kalyani presided over by Allama Prabhu where Virasaivas like Basavanna and Chennabasavanna congregated. When Mahadevi, wandering naked, arrived at Anubhava Mantapa, she was greeted with much skepticism. Allama Prabhu, uncertain of her spiritual competence, challenged, "Why come you hither, O woman in the budding blossom of youth? If you can tell your husband's identity, come, sit. Else, pray, be gone!" Mahadevi answered,

*All of mankind are my parents. It is they
who made this matchless match of mine
with Chenna Mallikarjuna.
While all the stars and planets looked on,
my guru gave my hand into His;
the Linga became the groom,
And I the bride.
Therefore is Chenna Mallikarjuna
my husband
And I have no truck with
any other of this world.*

Allama Prabhu interrogated her for a long time, and at the end of it, all the Virasaivas recognized Mahadevi's worth. Allama Prabhu acknowledged: "Your body is female in appearance, but your mind is merged with God!" Thus, Mahadevi came to be accepted in their inner circles, and out of respect and affection, she came to be called Akka or elder sister.

Akka Mahadevi continued her *tapas* in Kalyani under the guidance of Allama Prabhu, and the *vachanas* composed at this stage reflect her progress.

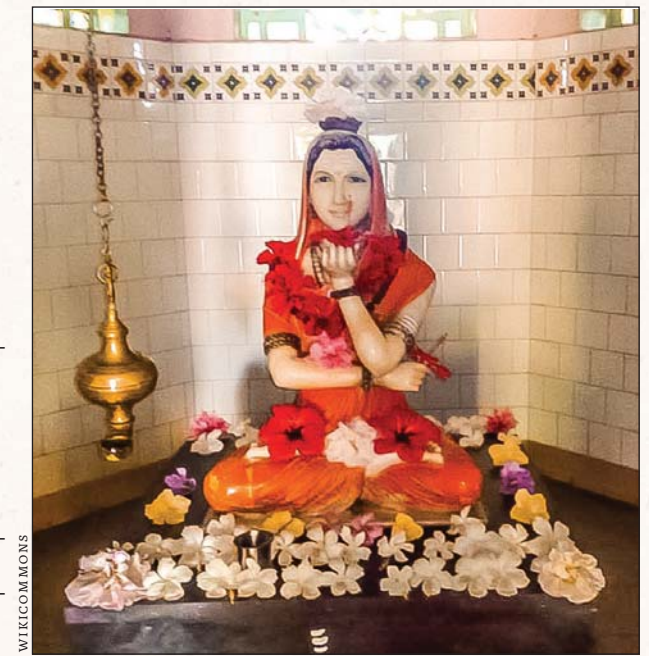
*The leaves on the apple tree,
in shapes as countless as their number,
show many shades of green,
none quite like the other.
On the rose bush next to it,
leaves and petals do just the same
and so do blades of grass,
lobelias and daisies,*

Still revered today:
*a shrine to Mahadevi
at Udathadi, her birth-
place in Karnataka*

*each shade of color unique.
Akka Mahadevi longed
to find your face
and found it everywhere,
O Chenna Mallikarjuna!*

After a few years of *sadha*—na, Akka Mahadevi went to the famous Siva temple at Sri Sailam in Andhra Pradesh. It is said that she spent the last months of her life in various caves, completing her process of enlightenment, and attained Mahasamadhi, divine union with her Lord. Unverifiable historical records indicate that she died in her mid-twenties. Legend tells us that she was consumed in a flash of light, leaving only her poems behind as a chron-

icle of a spiritual journey that still evokes awe and respect in the hearts of all.



O Lord, White as Jasmine!

Here is a sampling of Akka Mahadevi's poems, excerpted from the book Speaking of Siva, translated by A. K. Ramanujan, available from Penguin Classics.

Locks of shining red hair, a crown of diamonds, small beautiful teeth and eyes in a laughing face that light up fourteen worlds—I saw His glory, and seeing, I quell today the famine in my eyes. I saw the haughty Master for whom men, all men, are but women, wives. I saw the Great One who plays at love with Shakti, original to the world. I saw His stance and began to live.

The bee that was engaged all along in drinking the nectar from the White Jasmine is consumed totally in that very process. Not even the Symbol remains!

You are the forest; You are all the great trees in the forest; You are bird and beast playing in and out of the trees. O Lord White as Jasmine filling and filled by all, why don't You show me Your face?

When I didn't know myself, where were You? Like the color in the gold, You were in me. I saw in You, Lord White as Jasmine, the paradox of Your being in me without showing a limb.

People, male and female, blush when a cloth covering their shame comes loose. When the Lord of lives drowned without a face in the world, how can you be modest? When all the world is the eye of the Lord, onlooking everywhere, what can you cover and conceal?

It was like a stream running into the dry bed of a lake, like rain pouring on plants parched to sticks. It was like this world's pleasure and the way to the other, both walking towards me. Seeing the feet of the master, O Lord White as Jasmine, I was made worthwhile.

Listen, sister, listen. I had a dream. I saw rice, betel, palm leaf and coconut. I saw an ascetic come to beg, white teeth and small matted curls. I followed on his heels and held his hand, He who goes breaking all bounds and beyond. I saw the Lord, White as Jasmine, and woke wide open.

Sunlight made visible the whole length of a sky, movement of wind, leaf, flower, all six colors on tree, bush and creeper: all this is the day's worship. The light of moon, star and fire, lightnings and all things that go by the name of light are the night's worship. Night and day in your worship. I forget myself, O Lord White as Jasmine.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Value Our Sadhus

Families should not hinder those who seek to devote their lives to the path of renunciation

BY PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

The following is an excerpt from a talk by His Divine Holiness, the head of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, given on the occasion of a sadhu initiation rite held on October 26, 1985. BAPS now has more than 900 sadhus.

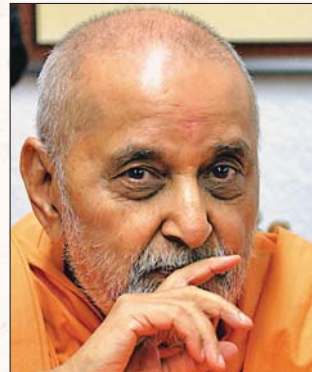
TO GIVE UP COMFORTS AND MATERIAL POSSESSIONS, wealth, good jobs and businesses, and tread this path is not a trivial matter. Today many virtuous youths from noble and respectable families have become sadhus. It is only after thoughtful consideration that they have stepped forth onto this noble path.

The more we encourage those who walk this path, the more progress we will see in society. The life of a householder is such that no matter how strong his good intentions, man becomes entangled in the web of worldly activities; thus, he is unable to engage in spirituality and social service as much as he would wish. For those noble souls who desire to sacrifice their lives for the good of society, there is no better way than the path of renunciation. Sadhus are able to offer devotion to God and at the same time give their services for the benefit of society.

Sometimes parents try to dissuade their children from following this noble calling, saying, "It would make us look bad in society." That is hard to believe. If your son were to follow the way of vice, if he became a drunkard, if he engaged in adultery or immoral activities, that would certainly make you, your family and your community look bad. But if he walks the path of God and offers devotion, then your name is made even more luminous!

Some may feel that these young men are becoming sadhus because they had nothing to eat at home. Here, no one has become a sadhu motivated by hunger pangs. You all know that young men from America and London have come here to become sadhus. Many of those receiving initiation are engineers. Many have received other degrees and are highly qualified.

Some feel that the highly qualified engineers, doctors and other graduates here might have been very useful working for our nation—and they are becoming sadhus! But all the professionals who become sadhus will accomplish a hundred million times more work in their lifetime as a sadhu than they could have accomplished in their respective fields. Yet we question how our nation's work will be done without these engineers? There will never be a shortage of people for those worldly tasks. That work will never come to a halt. But today our society has a desperate need for people to perform that most



fundamental work, which is the development of character. Think about it. If we offer such talented, illustrious young men from society at the holy feet of God, they will do such great work that thousands of others will be inspired to become good.

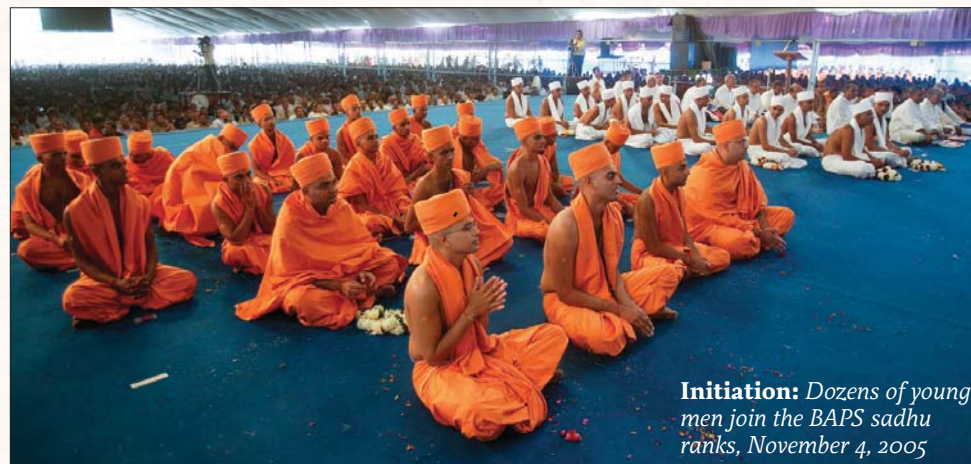
Today many of our children migrate to foreign lands. We are unable to even set eyes on them. We lose contact with them—not even a letter! Yet our life goes on. We should be similarly glad if our son walks on such a noble path of renunciation. Then, if we can just understand that our son is sitting in a place even greater than America! He is in Akshardham with God, in God's service. And what a great thing that is, for in God's palace, misery does not exist!

From a small family, he is now entering a large family. From one small community, he moves to a very large one—the community of the entire world becomes his. They begin to develop the expansive notion of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, "the whole world is my family." For others, it is just "me and my brother" or "me and my wife;" they see nothing beyond that. Whereas for the sadhu "The entire world is mine. All those living in the world are my people, and I want to do good to them all." He dedicates

his entire life for this noble cause.

So, if anyone from your family wishes to take this path, you should happily offer your blessings. Truly, spiritual welfare will be the reward for those who take this path. No one will suffer a loss in this endeavor.

Often parents are not overly concerned if their son ruins his life in bad company, but if he walks on the path to God they become worried. "What will become of him? Will he like it there? Will he be all right?" But when the parents get their son married, do they worry about questions like "Will he like it or not?" Do we even ask him? Nothing like that ever happens. We simply impose it upon him and worry about the consequences later. The thought "will you like it in a foreign country?" does not cross our mind. Therefore, this path will also be agreeable to him. If he is spiritually inclined, if he desires to walk on this path, then we should very enthusiastically offer him at the feet of God. What he will be able to accomplish at home, he will be able to accomplish ten million-fold if he walks on this path.



Initiation: Dozens of young men join the BAPS sadhu ranks, November 4, 2005



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COMMUNITY PROPERTY AND JOINT TENANCY: WHY IT MATTERS HOW YOU HOLD PROPERTY

A year after they were married, in 1969, Ajit and Inayat bought a home in California. Their realtor suggested they hold it in joint tenancy. That turned out to be bad advice. “It’s more convenient,” he explained. “When one of you passes on, the survivor gets the decedent’s half of the home automatically and without probate.”

All the young couple remembered was “without probate.” Ajit told Inayat that when his unmarried uncle died unexpectedly, the estate was tied up in probate court for a year. He would not want her to be subjected to that kind of delay and expense. Joint tenancy it would be.

Shortly after they celebrated their fortieth wedding anniversary, Ajit suddenly passed away. As planned, his widow received his half of the home without the delay or costs of probate. With their children raised and the home too large for her to manage, Inayat put the house on the market for \$900,000 and received an offer for the full amount within a week, this for a home they had bought decades earlier for under \$50,000.

But with the sale came a shock: she had to pay federal and state capital gains taxes on \$275,000 of the sale proceeds. “Why?” she asked her realtor.

“Because you and Ajit held your home in joint tenancy rather than as community property,” he said.

“What difference does that make?” she asked, raising her voice. “About \$65,000 in taxes,” he retorted.

His answer was curt but the math was correct. Holding their home in joint tenancy meant that when Ajit died, Inayat did not get a full “step-up in basis,” a technical term for a financial favor we do our heirs at death.

When an heir receives a full step-up in basis, the property he or she receives from us upon our death is viewed by the IRS as though they had bought it at its full fair market value. So if they sell it, they may have little or no capital gains to worry about. If Ajit and Inayat had held their home as community property, Inayat would have avoided being taxed on the \$275,000, her realtor explained. “That’s not fair!” Inayat moaned. “I know, but it’s the law.” Though fictional, this tale is based on the many painful experiences of married couples living in community property states.

You may have no capital gains to worry about, even if you use joint tenancy. Why? Every home owner has a \$250,000 exclusion from capital gains tax when they sell a personal residence, as long as they’ve lived there at least two years. Married couples can combine their exclusions for a total of \$500,000. In certain markets, however, even that may not fully cover the gain.

So, if you’re married, should you rush out and change title to your home and other assets (rental property and investments held in joint tenancy have no \$250,000 exclusion from capital gains tax) from joint tenancy to community property? Not necessarily. Best to first get legal advice and a financial analysis of your situation.

Learn more about estate planning and planned giving at www.hheonline.org.



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Prior to buying a home, talk to your real estate agent about the differences between joint tenancy and community property

JANUARY TO MARCH ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS									
Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment			Toshadevi Nataraj 120.00		Kauai Aadheenam Religious Art and Artifacts Fund			Total 219.00	
Anonymous 50.00			Barathy Sockanathan 44.63		Rajadeva Alahan 51.00			Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund	
Roshan Harilela 375.00			Vayudeva Varadan 36.00		Michael R. Eisen 25.00			Murali Balaji 101.00	
Gunasekaran Kandasamy 181.93			Other Donations 4,800.00		Total 76.00			Shyamadeva Dandapani 33.00	
Mira Das & R. Mahalingam 250.00			Total 5,330.64					Total 134.00	
Gayatri Rajan 75.00			Nadesan Family Lord Muruga Shum Fund		A. Saravanapavan Family Murugan Temple Pillaiyar Shrine Fund			Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund	
Pathmini Saravanapavan 100.00			Sadhunathan Nadesan 501.00		Pathmini Saravanapavan 150.00			Victoria Lynne Johnson 3.00	
Keith Wallach 50.00			Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam		Thank You Bodhinatha Fund			Sivakumar Saravan 1,000.00	
Other Donations 75,163.10			Anonymous 50.00		Hotranatha Ajaya 33.00			Total 1,003.00	
Total 76,245.03			Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment		Anonymous 1,999.21			Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment	
Iraivan Temple Endowment			Rajendra Giri 110.00		Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai 324.00			Anonymous 720.00	
Frank Burkhardt 10.00			Pathmini Saravanapavan 100.00		Joseph Edward Fitzgerald 40.00			Marlene Carter 108.00	
Anonymous 10.00			Total 210.00		Debashis Ghosh 300.00			Sunil Chacko 265.00	
Dheeraj Handa 303.00			Sri Subramuniya Ashram Scholarship Fund		Gunasekaran Kandasamy 407.82			Sasikumar Darmalingam 20.00	
Victoria Lynne Johnson 11.00			Rajendra Giri 110.00		Malaysia Mission 21.26			Natraj Narayanswami 11.00	
Mahesh M. Mehta 87.18			Anonymous 324.00		Toshadevi Nataraj 50.00			Subramaniam Pennathur 50.01	
Neela Oza 51.00			Total 434.00		Mano Navaratnarajah 150.00			Ananthakumar Renganathan 300.00	
Gayatri Rajan 25.00			Sri Subramuniya Kottam Fund		Mrunal Patel 5,001.00			Muthu Senthilkumar 100.00	
Yenumula Reddy 200.00			Anonymous 300.00		Alex Ruberto 45.00			Ganga Sivanathan 50.00	
Other Donations 76,111.88			Pathmini Saravanapavan 100.00		Chamundi Sabanathan 108.00			Sivaruban & Nishiya Sivanesan 150.00	
Total 76,809.06			Total 400.00		Aran Sambandar 162.00			Sankara Skandanatha 175.00	
Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund			Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment		Som Sharma 250.00			Andrew Stich 300.00	
Anonymous 50.00			Anonymous 108.00		Devi Tandavan 31.00			Soma Sundaram 10.00	
Thirujnanam Arnasalon 19.90			Mano Navaratnarajah 75.00		Sambandan Umamaheswaran 101.00			Total 2,259.01	
Anil Ananda Badhwar 9.00			Total 183.00		Anba Dayananden Valayten 7.93			Yogaswami Hindu Boys' Home Fund	
Hemakshesha Naatha Batumallah 6.00			Hinduism Today Production Fund		Vayudeva Varadan 42.00			Anonymous 664.00	
Mekaladeva Batumallah 6.00			Ron & Jennifer Burke 150.00		Anuradha Venkatachalam 101.00			Maha Ganapati Temple of Arizona Endowment	
Tarakini Gunasegaran 15.96			David Case 100.00		Aran Veylan 214.45			Michael R. Eisen 50.00	
Victoria Lynne Johnson 11.00			P.C. Ghosh 60.00		Michael Wasyliw 648.00			Naga Surya Prathima Kanumilli 1.00	
Juhivaasana Koothan 9.94			Hiranya Gowda 93.00		Total 10,144.67			Total 51.00	
Suguna Krishnan 60.40			Joe & Arlene Maguire 210.00		Udayan Care Endowment Fund			Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund	
Anil Kumar 18.00			Murli Melwani 1,500.00		Michael R. Eisen 25.00			Vayudeva Varadan 36.00	
Punithavathi Kuppusamy 40.00			Subramaniam Pennathur 50.01		Paramanand & Jaya Gunani 25.00			Ramanathaswamy Temple Cleaning Fund	
Bhaveshan Moorghen 3.28			Sakuntalai Periasamy 83.26		Total 50.00			Danyse Crotti 196.20	
Shanda Kumaran Moorghen 3.28			Gayatri Rajan 75.00		Jai & Laxmi Reddy 25.00			Hiranya Gowda 99.00	
Udeyadeva Moorghen 9.94			Tilak R. Sharma 48.97		Alex Ruberto 60.00			Kulagan Moonesawmy 19.90	
Jogendra Moorroogen 4.98			Murari Singh 100.00		Total 85.00			Toshadevi Nataraj 60.00	
Vidyadevi Moorroogen 3.31			Ganga Sivanathan 172.00		Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment			Ganga Sivanathan 100.00	
Dhanika Nagalingam 10.00			Total 2,642.24		Shyamal Chandra Debnath 100.00			Total 475.10	
Vinod Nair 29.97			Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund		Murugan Temple Yalpanam Festival Fund			Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment	
Toshadevi Nataraj 60.00			Roshan Harilela 375.00		Pathmini Saravanapavan 150.00			Anonymous 224.00	
Padmini Pareatumbee 6.67			Gunasekaran Kandasamy 181.93		Manitha Neyam Trust Fund			Dheeraj Handa 63.00	
Subramaniam Pennathur 49.98			Jai & Laxmi Reddy 25.00		Bala Sivaceyon 60.00			Ananda Manickam 22.00	
Anonymous 39.34			Alex Ruberto 75.00		Nutanaya Sivaceyon 10.00			Natraj Narayanswami 33.00	
Hemavalli Sivalingam 1.84			Gouri Shanker 11.00		Total 70.00			Toshadevi Nataraj 30.00	
Tejasinha Sivalingam 19.34			Anurag Sharadendu 101.00		Kapaleeshwara Temple Orphanage			Total 372.00	
Javanya Skanda 37.18			Rodney & Ilene Standen 30.00		V. Mahadev 108.00			Hindu Association of West Texas Endowment	
Thillaiampalam Srijaerajah 250.00			Matthew Wiczork 5.00		Michael Zimmermann 6.00			Hindu Association of West Texas 25,000.00	
Total 775.31			Total 803.93		Total 114.00			Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund	
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund			Hindu Education Endowment		Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund			Anil Ananda Badhwar 18.00	
Anil Ananda Badhwar 9.00			Hasu N. & Hansa H. Patel 100.00		Suhashini Muniandy 15.00			Sanjay Dahya 28.90	
Peter Tracy Balogh 1,029.00			The Kautilya Endowment		Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund			Anil Kumar 18.00	
Darlene Bolesny 120.00			Michael R. Eisen 25.00		Krishnapriya Ramachandran 100.00			Total 64.90	
Nalini Chenganna 344.26			Anonymous 10,000.00		Karnataka Temple Development Fund			Panchangam Endowment Fund	
Tirunyanam Gunasegaran 88.54			Total 10,025.00		Hiranya Gowda 150.00			Paul DeSantis 10.00	
Souda Koothan 198.91			Hindu Press International Endowment Fund		Sri Ganesha Hindu Temple of Utah Endowment Fund			Kalpana & Muralikumar Krishnamurthi 25.00	
Bhaveshan Moorghen 6.66			Hiranya Gowda 63.00		Sri Ganesha Hindu Temple of Utah 2,500.00			Total 35.00	
Shanda Kumaran Moorghen 6.66			Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund		Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment			Digital Dharma Endowment	
L.P.A.L. Muthiah 500.50			Mano Navaratnarajah 225.00		Anonymous 50.00			Anonymous 325.08	
P. Paari 499.00			Gassa Patten 1,350.00		Canaganayagam Kugendra 20.00			Insurance Premium	
Harilal Patel 499.00			Total 1,575.00		Total 70.00			Mrunal Patel 3,003.00	
Rakesh & Alka Patel 399.00			Saiva Agamas Trust		Hindu Literature Fund			Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment	
Kirtideva Peruman 19.84			Ganga Sivanathan 70.00		Rajendra Giri 110.00			Other Donations 600.00	
Niroshnee Peruman 23.15			Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment		Anonymous 56.10			Total Contributions \$230,507.90	
Ramrakhi 499.00			Anil Ananda Badhwar 18.00		John & Abha Wiersba 153.00			Funds at Market Value, March 31,2014	
Alex Ruberto 158.00			Anil Kumar 18.00		Total 319.10			Total Endowment Funds \$13,039,700.88	
Sai Singh 120.00			Total 36.00		Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund			Grand Total \$13,039,700.88	
Logavalli Sinsamy 169.23			Tirumular Sannidhi Preservation Fund		Hiranya Gowda 153.00				
Potriyan Sivanathan 18.20			Shyamadeva Dandapani 33.00		Rajagopal Krishnan 60.00				
Javanya Skanda 23.22			Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund		Michael Zimmermann 6.00				
Bala Soobramanien 59.80			Tammash Gupta 108.00						
K. Thiagarajan Executive Director 500.50			Nanesh & Sanchita Gupta-Goyal 51.00						
Total 5,291.47			Total 159.00						
Kadavul Nataraja Ardra Abhishekam Endowment			Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund						
Anonymous 10.00			Tammash Gupta 108.00						
Aravindraj Chandrasekaran 9.00			Nanesh & Sanchita Gupta-Goyal 51.00						
Devajyothi Kondapi 102.00			Total 159.00						
Gowri Nadason 161.36									
Parimala Selvaraj 124.00									
Bala Sivaceyon 30.00									
Ananth Vember 20.00									
Total 456.36									
Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund									
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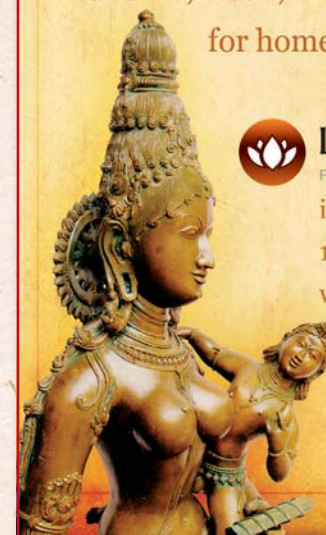


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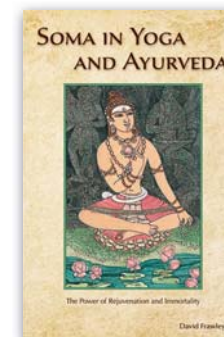
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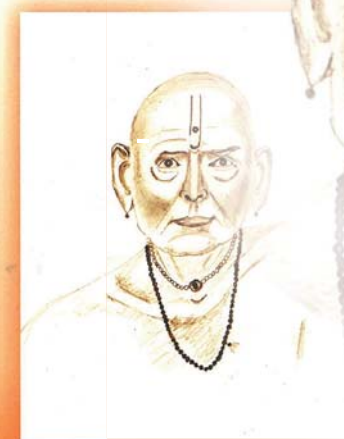
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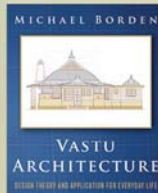
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Above, a highly popular costume contest for children is held each August as part of Janmashtami* celebrations. Last year's Janmashtami was the most attended and deemed "the best ever." **Right**, Two teens, flanked by dignitaries, including USA Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, proudly hold their Youth Awards for outstanding Seva done to uplift the community.



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popular events, such as the ones pictured above, in which all may participate,

You are encouraged to consider establishing a similar body in your locality, and invited to contact HGH to learn more.

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* Houston's next Janmashtami will happen August 23 2014, 6-12 PM, George R. Brown Convention Center

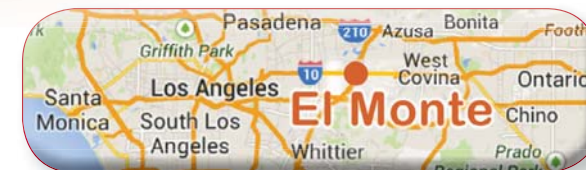


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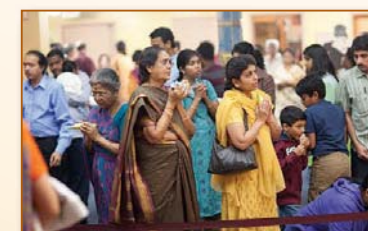


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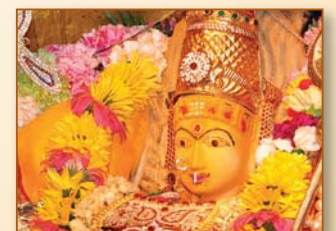
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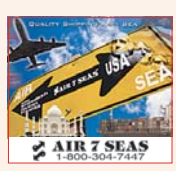


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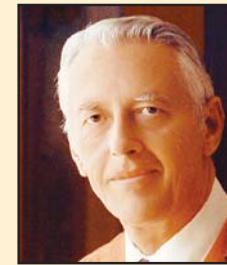
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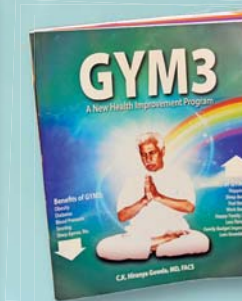
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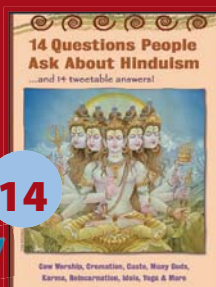
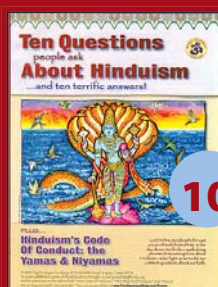
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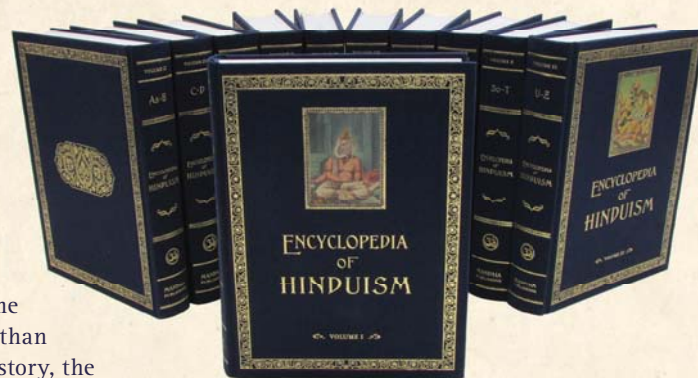
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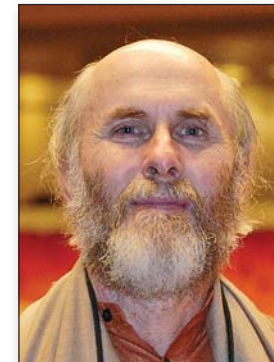


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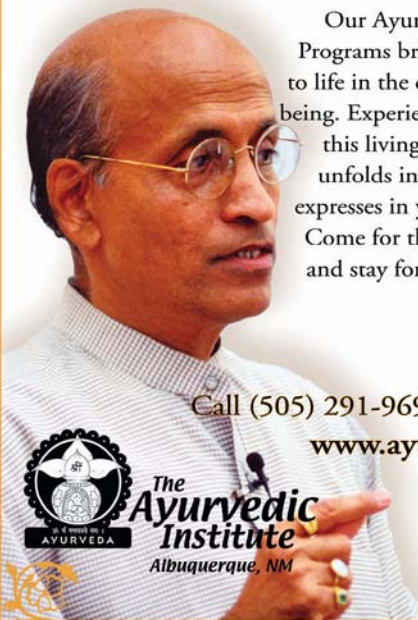
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Google has been working to improve its Street View program for a while now, but only in recent years has it introduced the Trekker program. One of its missions is to digitally record many places that cars can't go. To do so, the cameraman wears a backpack mounted with 15 cameras, each of which snaps a 75 mega-pixel photo every two and a half seconds. So far the program has digitized the Grand Canyon, Mount Fuji, the Great Barrier Reef and more. For this particular project, five local men trekked around the temple complex for up to eight hours a day, taking over a million photos.

Cambodia receives four million tourists a year. Hopes are that this new way of exploring the site will encourage more people to come and see the real thing. Visit bit.ly/angkorwat360 to start vicariously exploring the vast wonders of Angkor Wat.



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The rig: A Cambodian technician carries a backpack mounted with a device housing 15 cameras used to digitally map the temple

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The manuscript was produced in 1649 for Rana Jaga Singh, king of the Mewar kingdom in Rajasthan. According to an article from *DNA India*, it was written in seven volumes. Its 800 pages of text were penned by a Jain scribe, Mahatma Hirananda. Its paintings were created by various artists, including

master painter Sahib Din. The artwork includes intricate paintings of Gods, battles, landscapes and animals.

Pages of the original text were given to a British colonial in the early 1800s. The manuscript has since found itself divided between various organizations in the US and the UK. Through a three-year effort by The British Library and the CSMVS Museum of Mumbai, the masterful work has been assembled and restored.

The full digital version can be viewed here: www.bl.uk/ramayana. It may be slow to load, but it's well worth the wait.

Vivid storytelling: (clockwise from left) text and paintings as seen on the Web, accompanied by explanatory captions; Rama heads into exile with his wife and brother; Sugriva divides his forces to search for Sita, while Rama gives his ring as a token to the esteemed captain, Hanuman, who will lead the expedition to the south.

